07/07/15

Dear Copyright Office,

I have watched the demise of our creative economy over the years as a result to loss of copyright ownership. With the personal computer's ability to catalog and search by criteria, a sudden wave of available imagery, video and audio files became accessible to anyone. Prior to this technology revolution, commissioned work was the only way to acquire imagery and audio property. Artists were promised riches in the 1980s by mass-marketing their work through stock image houses. This quick turn-about in file downloads and ownership transfers had an enormous negative impact on the value of creative works. I never agreed with or saw value in stock creative work and never participated in the practice as it competes with it's own contributors.

I've been an illustrator for over 30 years and have had the privilege to work with top-notch agencies, designers and art directors. We, as an industry, value the work we create collectively or on our own. We should be able to choose who we sell our work to and what the parameters of the usage is. The only way to have control over our own creations is through ownership of the intellectual property. That shouldn't mean that the second a project is completed that you have to rush to file paperwork in order to protect and retain it's value. Others should have no claim over my creations without a formal agreement to which I agree. Let's be honest here, if a created work had no value, then why are third parties fighting so hard to have access to it? That value can take many forms but the reward of it's value should fall back to the work's creator, not to some random third party opportunist.

Any time someone downloads something off the Internet they are acutely aware that it was not their own creation. Changing the color to black and white, flipping it, or re-cropping does not make it original or even adaptive. It's theft through duplication. Allowing this to freely rape our creative community is having devastating impacts. Creative drive is negatively effected and ingenuity will be replaced with cobbling together of existing imagery. We need to keep our creative works sacred and preserve it's unique value. This will encourage and foster more creativity. I for one, would like to leave behind a legacy of creative works, but I would also like to rewarded for my dedication and experience to my craft. It's part of the reward. Reuse and licensing makes up a portion of my income which is welcomed on projects that pay substandard fees. Subsequent usage plays a roll in my decision to accept certain assignments and fees. Without this ownership in my possession, I'm loosing potential deserved income. Putting the value in perspective, I'm sitting on a property that could earn as much as $250 thousand dollars when and if I choose to leverage the property. Without ownership of those rights, the devastating loss to me as the creator of this work becomes apparent. Only I can leverage this value as it's creator!

Creative works mold and shape us and our cultural heritage. We need to stop trying to take if from those who work very hard shaping that heritage. With that said, I oppose the "Next Great Copyright Act" and recommend copyright law that rewards it's contributors rather than opportunists that contribute nothing but legal work-arounds to cash in on us who are making a creative living.

Most Sincerely,

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