July 23, 2015

I was shocked to discover only today that the 2015 Orphan Works and Mass Digitation Act is being considered. I wish to register my horror and dismay.

As an artist who already makes so little with my art that I have to work as a medical transcriptionist, I am appalled that the government believes they are entitled to legalize the theft of creative work. As a member of the Hampton Arts League in Hampton, Virginia, I know many others who also will be seriously damaged by this corrupt law.

If I do a painting, I may spend many, many more hours on it than I will be reasonably compensated for in the straight up sale of the painting. Owning the copyright is the only part of it that allows me to profit decently from the artwork when I sell prints or other versions of the original. Without this option, artists often make no more than fast food servers.

This proposed law is an outrage and insufferably unjust. Artists need the right to exclusively own their own creative work. Illegal theft of artwork goes on currently while laws are in place that are supposed to protect artists, so if the theft is legalized how will any of us survive artistically? How can it be that consideration is even being given to such an immoral idea? This is a violation of an enormous magnitude.

I once produced artwork for sticker designs for a company and not much later found the design on “made in China” stickers from some other company. I had sold the design to the original company, so they owned the copyright. If the copyright had been in my possession, I wouldn’t have had the resources to hold another country accountable for this theft. Neither would I if my work was stolen in America. The average artist does not have the resources to protect their work against the violation of internet companies that help themselves to work they have not procured. The Orphan Works and Mass Digitation Act would only benefit thieves, and I thieves are who is behind this initiative.

This evil law does not belong in America. It should NOT be allowed to pass.

Legalizing the widespread theft of creative work is an abhorrent idea that seriously degrades and punishes artists in every medium and benefits and enriches companies that ought to be paying outright or with royalties for what they sell.

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