July 23, 2015
Maria Pallante
Register of Copyrights
U.S. Copyright Office 101 Independence Ave. S.E. Washington, DC 20559-6000
RE: Notice of Inquiry, Copyright Office, Library of Congress Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works (Docket No. 2015-01)

Dear Ms. Pallante and the Copyright Office Staff:

My name is Natalie Wilkinson, and I am a freelance artist. I do not have many years of experience under my belt, as so many of my highly respected mentors do. I do not have a vast collection of master works of art as they do, either. However, I do have one major thing in common with these great people; they started from the bottom, as I am now. What I do have is an ambitious and hard-working drive that has allowed me to work with several clients for print illustration as well as web design. I am working hard to build up a name for myself, and a part of myself goes into every work I create. Having the ability to delegate the rights and licensing to my own works is of paramount importance on an already uphill battle riddled with staunch competition.

Visual artists have been asked by the Copyright Office to respond to specific questions and my answers can be found below:

1. What are the most significant challenges related to monetizing and/or licensing photographs, graphic artworks, and/or illustrations?

The main problem arises when clients want you to sign away all your rights to your work, so that you cannot collect royalties or make any more money off of the image, should the appropriate opportunity arise.

2. What are the most significant enforcement challenges for photographers, graphic artists, and/or illustrators?

In short, people don't want to pay for artwork. It is all too easy to run a search on Google, right-click, and save the image. With a little know-how, changes can be made, and the work is stolen. This is becoming more common with the advent of newer technologies.

We're told that our work is protected the moment it is created. Even with this, however, it t is all too easy for one's work to be stolen and copied. Anyone with a basic knowledge of photo editing software can erase your signature on the work and go full speed ahead to sabotage your hard work. Having ones work stolen with such flippant disregard is a direct insult, a slap in the face.

The scales are tipped against us as artists. Cease and desist letters are nothing more than hollow threats without the aid of an expensive lawyer.

3. What are the most significant registration challenges for photographers, graphic artists, and/or illustrators?

The process for registering multiple works is confusing and does not always offer the protection one would think.

4. What are the most significant challenges or frustrations for those who wish to make legal use of photographs, graphic art works, and/or illustrations?

It truly is not that difficult to get in contact with the artist if the name is displayed on the artwork. Social media, among other mediums, offers an excellent avenue to track down the artist and appropriately acquire the permission.

5. What other issues or challenges should the Office be aware of regarding photographs, graphic artworks, and/or illustrations under the Copyright Act?

Because art is not commonly viewed as a “serious career,” our hard work is taken lightly, and people believe that it is not a big deal to just copy/paste. There must be a better way of doing things.

6. What are the most significant challenges artists would face if these new copyright proposals become law?

To know that one's work could so easily be stolen without the ability to take the appropriate measures is very disheartening to those like me, who are just starting out, with limited resources, that would not be able to afford counsel to defend their rights against an infringer of copyright.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this matter.

Thanks,
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