Rick Jones
6 Redondo Drive
Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

U.S. Copyright Office
101 Independence Ave. S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20559-6000

July 2, 2015

To Whom It May Concern, U.S. Copyright Office~

It is with a sense of resignation that I must comment on Docket No. 2015–01, Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works. I say resignation, as we have already addressed this issue twice as 'Orphan Works' legislation, and I thought that visual creators spoke loudly and strongly against any such change in Copyright laws as they now stand.

I have been a freelance artist since 1985, graduating from Washington State University with a BS in Fine Arts, and from UC Santa Cruz with a graduate degree in Science Illustration (1996). For 30 years, I have honed my skills, (both artistic and business,) worked with clients and built up an inventory of commercial and fine art. No one else had a hand in my original work, I have given up much to be able to pursue it in fact, as do most freelance artists. I, and most freelancers I know, often went without healthcare, new cars, and retirement accounts that many other people seek in their employment plans. What I do have is my work.

I have paintings, graphic prints, pen and ink work, and digital content- I license some images, and when I do, it is a significant addition to my income. It follows that I fail to understand why I should be providing, free of charge, visual content to parties who have done nothing to create an interesting image. My skills and images are the result of years of hard work, and a unique perspective that is mine alone. I object strongly to the idea that once I create artwork and use it, that it then should be free to anyone else who cares to use it, whether that party be a business or an individual.

I have worked for large publishing concerns (National Geographic, Scientific American), museums, small nonprofits, and sold art as a fine artist. What I have always known is that within whatever contract I signed, those images were mine to do with as I pleased, and if anyone used it without my explicit permission, they were doing so wrongly. Whether intentionally or not, they were stealing something that wasn't theirs. Just as recording firms defend their rights against online sharing, just as large filmmakers pursue piracy issues, I was confident that if someone used my images without asking, I could pursue it with the vigor that I thought necessary to resolve the infringement issue. I have had to do so on several occasions, and copyright law has always been there for me, as the sole creator and owner of those rights.

There is no copyright problem for visual artists…it is assumed that we own the images we create, registered or not, for as long as we live. It is assumed no one can take our livelihoods, whether profitable or not, away from us without compensation or consent. In an increasingly digital world, this matters more than ever as search engines make all content available. This item under consideration, Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works seems to be for the benefit of those businesses and private parties who wish to access the life's work of creative people who have put their creative efforts on the line and have a more than reasonable expectation that they own the fruits of their labors, just as an small business would.

Please reject this legislation. From my perspective, this rewriting of copyright law will be in effect sanctioning the seizing of my property by entities who have no right to it.

Respectfully,
Rick Jones