July 20, 2015

Catherine Rowland
Senior Advisor to the Register of Copyrights
US Copyright Office:

My name is Joanna Hunt, and I am an American visual artist. I am writing in opposition to the 2015 Orphan Works and Mass Digitization Report. One particularly upsetting point is how the new copyright act will change how an artist accesses the rights to their own works.

If this new copyright law goes into effect, visual artists would lose the inherent copyright on their works and would instead have to register each piece they wished to protect with the US Copyright Office. The process of digitizing and registering an artist's entire body of work, which can number in the tens of thousands, is an enormous challenge to both young and established artists alike. For a young artist, the individual registration of works becomes a major investment that, being unpublished and a recent college graduate, I would not be able to afford. Established artists would have to spend extreme amounts of time just documenting all the past works that must be registered under the proposed act. Instead of focusing on our careers and passion, visual artists will be forced to spend an exorbitant amount of time and money without compensation to hold the rights that were previously inherently given to us upon completion of a work under the current copyright act. This is a hindrance on artists, discouraging us from creating new content and contributing to the culture that this act will supposedly protect.

This new act would also incentivize art theft and unauthorized derivative works. Visual artists who would not want to go through the arduous process of registering all past, present, and future works, and there are many, would not have their works protected. It would make it much easier to steal an artist's work, something that is already a huge problem thanks to the Internet.

I, and many of my peers, have put a lifetime's worth of effort into making a career out of visual art. I am proud of my body of work and hope to expand it while still maintaining control over it. If this new Orphan Works act goes into effect, visual artists across the country will suddenly find that their work is worthless in the eyes of the law. I want to keep creating art, but an act like this would be extremely discouraging.

Sincerely,

Joanna Hunt
Illustrator and Concept Artist