July 20, 2015

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Maria Pallante
Register of Copyrights
U.S. Copyright Office
101Independence 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:

Thank you for taking a moment to read the below and for carefully considering the hardships that the proposed addition of the forced registration of intellectual property with corporate interestes, and extended collective licensing (orphan laws) will place on me as a visual artist and upon the visual art community as a whole. I'm a professional graphic designer and illustrator. I have been working in visual arts since graduating from college ten years ago - I pay my bills (and taxes) with the art I create. As someone who relies on art to make a living, I believe I have a true to life perspective on how copyright law actually works in the business world and how damaging it would be for congress to remove the rights I have to my own work in favor of giving my art to the public via the addition of orphan laws. Creating and enforcing an orphan copyright law would devastate the value the art that I (and others like me) create and make rights to our own work un-defendable in court. Should artists be forced to become slaves to what the public wants to steal from them? I am writing to you to request that Congress does not force me and other visual artists to be subject to that kind of tyranny and dis-justice.

I'm writing to make a plea for myself and for artists and professionals like me. Copyright law is not an abstract legal issue for us - it is a protective measure that allows us to create freely without fear of losing income or of losing the rights to our artwork. Current copyright law encourages freedom: freedom of expression, freedom to create without fear of that hard work being stolen without any way to recover damages. Our current copyright laws protect our valuable assets and encourages us to work hard and ultimately, what we do, supports the economy and society. Licensing and selling our artwork is how many of us make our livings. Please do not devalue what we do by allowing orphan copyright laws to be passed.

When I heard that the copyright office was proposing the socialization of copyright laws by instituting orphan laws and mandatory art registration, I was appalled. Doing so would effectively steal the rights I have to my own artwork in favor of the masses. Why is the copyright office seeking to sacrifice the visual art community in that underhanded way? Is it because no one in the copyright office is an artist, or is it because the policy makers in that office know that they won't have to be subjected to the laws they're suggesting be implemented simply because they will never have to support themselves with their artistic ability?

I know you are well aware of the facts after reading letters from leaders in the visual arts community, so I won't waste your time by repeating those details in this letter - I respect your time as valuable. And since I am aware that you are receiving letters from visual artist professionals who are more experienced and eloquent than I can ever claim to be (Brad Holland for one), I want to thank you again for reading and for taking into consideration my small voice. Again, please do NOT include orphan laws or mandatory registration for visual art in the new copyright laws as they would impose undue hardships on those of us who rely on our artwork to make a living.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Fleming
Graphic Designer/Illustrator/Freelance Artist