Comments RE: Copyright Protection of Visual Works

Hello, I am writing as a professional full-time illustrator of 15+ years. For the past 7 years I have worked exclusively digitally, and my work goes out all over the world; from the new Wendy (of Wendy's) to the credits of Paramount's "Charlotte's Web" to Newsweek, The Economist, The Evening Standard, I have years of experience and really hard work in the field. But even with so much under my belt it is an extremely rough way to make a living, with no benefits or safety net. Every day I can easily imagine my living drying up, especially with the onslaught of image clearinghouses. And retention of my copyright, for the purposes of re-use and re-licensing, is a significant factor.

I can't even imagine the onus of paying to actually register all of my illustration, much less the cost! Seriously, my work is out there everywhere already, heavens only knows how people are already using it, without consulting me and without permission. If they thought that they had consent, by default, I would lose a significant amount of my livelihood.

Case in point: I drew a spinal column for a client years ago. It's a beautiful illustration; fluid, brush-strokey, very unique. Since its original publication I have had two back doctors(!) contact me about re-licensing for their businesses. Had I no further copyright claim after the original publication that would have been money lost for me.

Please keep the copyright laws, which maintain that by default I retain copyright, as is. Our small entrepreneurial livings are hard enough as it is; if we lose ownership of our works it will be demeaning and make our lives needlessly more difficult.

Thank you for your time!

Kathryn Rathke
Kathryn Rathke Illustration

kr@kathrynrathke.com