Jesse Joshua Watson

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U.S. Copyright Office

101 Independence Ave. S.E.

Washington, D.C. 20559-6000

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to you as an award winning professional fine artist and illustrator of over 34 published books. I have been creating original art for more than 20 years and my imagery is how I survive. This is my livelihood and it is a cumulative process. Whether books of paintings, the value of my work is not repaid immediately. It take many years for these images to begin to collectively provide for my family and I. An image can have a life that can carry on beyond its initial purpose. The great illustrators in our American history, such as Norman Rockwell or N.C. Wyeth have held a place in our national artistic treasure because their work was for a current purpose, in terms of illustration, but the quality and grandeur of the work itself became part of the artists' legacies.

I write this letter with regards to a proposed law that would replace all existing copyright law; a law cleverly concocted by large internet firms and their legal advisors. Their business models are designed to supply the general public with access to other people's copyrighted work with the clear intention of making it legally possible to use work without paying the artists. This proposed law comes under the guise of a "reform" though the

real intent is very clear.

These “reforms” as they wish to call them, would allow the internet companies to stock their databases with our images, by either forcing the artist to hand over the work as ‘registered’ works or having unregistered work treated as orphans and copyrighting them as “derivative works”. For some reason, while acknowledging that this will cause special problems for visual artists, the Copyright Office has concluded that the artists should still be subject to orphan work laws.

This newly proposed copyright act would press for a mass digitization of our intellectual property by corporate interests, an extended collective licensing with the intent of replacing voluntary business agreements between artists and their clients, and a nightmarish scenario of a Copyright Small Claims Court to handle the guaranteed flood of lawsuits resulting from orphan works infringements.

Lobbyists and corporate attorneys have “testified” that once an artist’s work is published it has virtually no further commercial value and should therefore be available for use by the general public. This is an astonishing and callous absurdity that reflects more on the mindset of corporations and their legal advisors than on the actual value of the artist and what he/she does. In truth, the case made by these corporations is for a gross infringement of our intellectual property that is no different than robbery.

For professional artists whose livelihoods depend on what we create and the agreements we make to determine how the art is used, this is most definitely not an abstract legal issue. Our work does not lose value upon

publication. If anything our published work becomes part of our business inventories, and these inventories are now even more valuable to us in the digital age. The current “reforms” in the newly proposed law would in effect waive the responsibility of a potential user to find the copyright owner and redefine an orphaned work as any work by any artist that anyone finds ‘sufficiently’ hard to find. It’s a convenient setup to exempt the responsibility of the potential user from proper searching and void every rightsholder’s exclusive right to his/her own property, a right stated in Article 1, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution.

Freelance, independent artists are finding it challenging enough these days to earn a decent living without suffering further erosion of their earnings and potential earnings as imagined in these outrageous, morally and ethically corrupt proposals by those who have consistently devalued creative and intellectual property, culture, art and the artists who create it. This proposed law to replace existing copyright law should be dismissed as the dishonest, and unconstitutional, affront that it is.

Sincerely,

Jesse Joshua Watson

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