Kayla Wolden

Dear Copyright Office,

I'm sure you have already received many letters regarding your Notice of Inquiry on Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works, but this is an important enough topic to me personally that I had to submit my thoughts.

I am a young self-employed artist who is only just beginning in her career. I've been making art for years, but now that I am out of school and needing to earn a living, I am counting on my art to keep me afloat. I suffer from a myriad of chronic health problems that prevent me from being able to drive a car or handle a regular nine-to-five job, and so my art is my best, and possibly only, chance of making a decent future for myself, and is also my only source of income. My earnings from commissions are slim, as I am still mostly unknown as an artist and it can take years to build up enough of a following/fan-base to have a steady income.

I rely on our copyright laws to protect my work from art thieves, which are much too common on the internet. As a young artist, I feel safe knowing that if somebody steals my art or claims it as their own, it is, in fact, illegal, and I can confront the thief directly and demand that they remove the stolen work or otherwise take down the object in violation of copyright law. If they refuse to comply, I know that I can pursue legal help if necessary. I feel safe knowing that every piece of art I make, whether it be a pencil sketch or digital illustration, is protected under copyright law without me having to take any extra precautions.

If these laws changed or were replaced, I could be completely out of work. Experienced artists who have been in the business for many years are already receiving a steady income from earnings of past works and published illustrations, but if things change, my art career will be buried as it's only just starting to grow. I simply can't afford to do any kind of “registering” of my art before posting online for my viewers, and I absolutely dread the thought that a piece of custom art I made for a specific customer could just be snatched up, used, possibly modified and sold by a stranger without any consequences.

If these changes go through, art theft will be legal. People all over are already committing art theft crimes, either because they don't know any better, don't care, or just want to earn a profit off of something that isn't theirs, and they often get away with it despite the laws in place. We should be fighting to enforce the copyright laws we already have, rather than getting rid of artists' rights altogether and allowing others to get away with using an artist's work without their permission, and for profit!

There are *thousands* of artists out there who would be negatively affected by these changes, and I'm sure you've already heard from many of them. Please, don't take away our rights to our work. Earning a living is already unbelievably difficult and unpredictable for artists, and copyright laws are the only things keeping our work protected. If everyone was allowed to snag whatever piece of art they wanted to use for themselves, artists would be out of work.

Thank you for your time.

- Kayla Wolden