U.S. Copyright
Orphan Works 7-13-15

Dear U.S. Copyright Office,

I have been a freelance illustrator and graphic designer for over 30 years. I graduated from UCONN with a BA in Fine Art — schooling, for which I paid with hard work on top of my studies.

I'm self-employed, so I bear the full cost of expensive computers, printers, scanners, software, office supplies, domain registration, website hosting fees, website updates, agent fees, association memberships, continuing education, repairs, replacement — and risk.

I have no guarantee of payment, not a salary, not for any job I do. Only my reputation, quality and quantity of work, agreements and choice of clients and licensees keep checks coming in.

I pay my taxes, including the full cost of social security (most people with full time jobs only have to pay half, their employers pay the rest) and health insurance (same).

I earn my living by selling copyrights to my digital work — the rights to use my work. I choose how and when and with whom I agree to share those rights. We artists and writers are often underpaid, however if we keep our rights, a work created one year has the potential to bring in income for many years — not necessarily a lot of money, but many copyrights, added up, makes an income.

That is, IF the rights aren't hijacked by just anyone who says they tried to find the owner, then uses something for which they haven't paid. These hijackers can not only deprive me of income, they can ruin my reputation, which ruins my chance of earning a living in the future.

Copyright infringement does exactly the same damage to the individual rights owner as it does to multi-national corporations, but individuals have far less resources to fight it, or recover from it.

I created my images, I should be the only one to control how they are used. Without copyright protection I can't fight theft, misuse, or profiteering from my hard work.

<u>The act of creation creates the copyright — it has from the first moment of copyright law's existence in 1790</u>. Bad "research" should not be an excuse to break that basic right. And you <u>know</u> there will be bad research.

Due to staff cuts of 25% or more at big publishing companies, there are more self-employed artists/illustrators/graphic designers than ever. More cuts are on the way. The general workforce is downsizing, creating more and more independent contractors/self employed. More and people are, and will be, at risk from what amounts to out-and-out theft of intellectial property.

The mission of the Copyright Office is to promote creativity by administering and sustaining an effective national copyright system by protecting the works' creators. Allowing such an obvious disregard of individual's rights as we try to protect it from what amounts to the "more important" rights of corporate convenience and profiteering is in direct opposition to that mission.

With respect for <u>your</u> hard work,
Siri Weber Feeney

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