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Letter concerning Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Artists Pursuant to Copyright Office's Notice of Inquiry

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I draw and create original, carved block prints. I am an emerging artist whose livelihood increasingly depends on the sale of my art work, and more broadly, on the secure economic and moral support that copyright law does provide.

My background includes a B.A. in studio art from Saint Olaf College (Northfield, Minnesota) in 1991. In recent years, my commitment to visual art as a career has grown. I have been developing creative working relationships with local people. I am now represented by two independent, locally owned stores.

For me, copyright law as it currently exists helps to sustain me. It allows me to participate in society as someone who is shaping culture. I feel glad that the art images I create are automatically my copyright. I feel grateful that owning copyright protects my creations. With the law as it exists now, I can feel confident enough to put my weight into art as a viable career.

The following is a delineation of my concrete, tangible steps in the cycle of art. I include it to clarify and evoke appreciation for what my job involves. It is only a sketch, as it is only **part** of what I and others do to make art available as affordably as we can.

This past March, I spent over twenty hours creating the carved block of **“Herons Alight”** and several more hours printing originals from the block.

The process included:

- watching herons at local lakes,
- sketching basic gestures and forms of their bodies,
- finding pictures in books at the library,
- drawing on the linoleum surface of the block,
- carving the design into the linoleum,
- rolling ink onto the carved design,
- placing paper on top of the ink,
- rubbing the paper with the back of a teaspoon,
- carefully peeling up the paper, and
- painting touch ups.

After the picture dried over the course of a week, I:

- trimmed the paper,
- cut a mat board in the same size
- hand wrote a label with the title, medium, and my signature,
- placed the label on a mat board,
- enclosed the print and mat board in a cellophane sleeve,
- discussed the picture at shops with the people who represent me, and
- left the pictures with those people.

They then:

- added the wrapped pictures to their electronic records of their inventory,
- labeled the pictures, and
- placed the pictures in their shops for customers to find.

If and when the pictures sell, the people at the shops will:

- record the income,
- pay taxes,

- pay me a commission, and
- use the income to keep their shops open.

I will then:

- record the income,
- pay local, state, and federal taxes on the income. As a 46-year-old emerging artist, I do not yet pay federal taxes beyond the fourteen percent self-employment tax. In the future, the self-employment taxes I pay now will pay for my social security and medicare.

I will use the income for:

- necessities of life, so that I can create another picture
- purchasing an annual state business license for sole proprietorship
- purchasing supplies and other essentials

My art work retains value, even when in cooperation with other people, I turn it into different forms. I have turned various original prints of “Herons Alight” into different colors of 8 x 10” laser prints and 5 x 7” greeting cards.

I feel strongly that using my art work is a privilege for me and others. This privilege flows only from my consent and knowledge. Vital to me is the enduring, forever, and legally durable ability for me to decide how and by whom my art work is used. That makes it possible to create art from a personal origin.

Thank you for asking for comments. I learned a lot while responding to the request. Thank you for reading my letter, and for using it in the art of creating justice in the United States. Please feel free to contact me by mail, phone, or e-mail.

Sincerely and Respectfully,

Susan Elizabeth Hass