

It's time again for Bob Burridge's Online President's Message! Hope you are all enjoying this new feature, brought to you by your ISAP Board of Directors. I have appreciated your questions and comments concerning the previous President's Messages--You can write to me directly at rburridge@RobertBurridge.com

Let me clear up a misconception about copyright!

There is a trend by painters to put on the front of their painting, their signature, a copyright symbol ©, the year and lots of letters signifying all the clubs, societies and art organizations to which they belong. I'm writing to explain to the unknowing that not only is all this unnecessary, it actually signals amateur status and ignorance. Artists are guilty of this practice because they see others do it and therefore assume this makes them also a VIP and "member of the club."

Let me to clarify a few points. It could mean a big difference later on in your career. Copyrights are the way painters protect their creative efforts from being duplicated by others without permission. It is indicated by the © mark. A copyright can be bought, sold, rented or abandoned. So, for instance, if someone copies your work, you could take them to court and the judge may order them to stop doing it and there is no legal right for you to expect a financial gain or reward.

Most artists could not explain what a copyright means or when to use the © logo. Simply stated, the law says, as soon as you sign your name to the front of the painting you own the rights to that image forever. Reread that sentence again and again. Actually, it's 75+ years after your death. There is no legal reason to add a © to the front of your artwork. In fact, if you do, it makes your original painting appear as a print! It is also not necessary to put the year on the front. The proper place for all this stuff is on the back, in the center. So-- name only on the front. On the back goes: ©, Your name, year created and if you want, the abbreviation of your societies, i.e. ISAP. This is not just my opinion. It's standard practice in museums and professional art galleries. Of course you can continue to do whatever you want. I just felt you should know what the pros do.

However, if you register your painting image with the Library of Congress (download and complete the VA form on www.loc.gov/copyright, send in with a photo and \$35), you could legally receive financial rewards for damages to you by a court of law.

There is more refinement to all this, but for now I'm giving a brief overview of what you need to know. Here is an excellent reference book for your library: "Making it Legal" by Martha Blue, Northland Publishing, ISBNs 0-87358-470-8.

Also, I often hear from artists: "If we change the copied image by 15% that it is legal." Wrong, wrong, wrong! Another misconception amongst artists. Try and prove 15% in a court of law. If you copy others' works (including copying others' photographs), you are an "infringer" and you are copying. You deserve to treat yourself better than this. You already have the talent to create your own original works. If you think what you are doing could be wrong, it probably is.

So... take your own photos or do your own original work. One less thing to worry about while creating in your studio!

Some of our ISAP Members have written in about their websites:
Check out www.art-lorena.com (Lorena Kloosterboer), www.elsey.com (Kathleen Elsey)
and www.zobeckart.com (Lou Zobeck) Congratulations Artists!

Bob