



# POSTER ARTISTS' RIGHTS AND PROTECTION:

A GUIDE BY THE GRAPHIC ARTISTS GUILD

## Welcome to Colour Haiku 2024!

As a poster artist, understanding your rights and how to protect your creative work is crucial. Posters are often widely published and distributed, making them particularly vulnerable to copyright infringement. Their eye-catching and visually pleasing designs are attractive to those who may attempt to pass them off as their own or monetize them by using them on t-shirts and other merchandise. Here's a quick guide to ensure you're informed and empowered.



## COPYRIGHT BASICS

- **What is Copyright?** Copyright is a legal right that grants the creator of original work exclusive rights to its use and distribution. As a poster artist, your artwork is automatically protected by copyright as soon as it's created and fixed in a tangible form (e.g., a digital file or printed poster).
- **Your Rights:** You have the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, display, and create derivative works based on your original poster art. No one else can use your artwork without your permission. However, despite these exclusive rights, your poster is still vulnerable to copyright infringement. It's important to protect your work!

## PROTECTING YOUR WORK

- **Register Your Copyright:** While your work is automatically protected by copyright, registering it with the U.S. Copyright Office provides additional legal benefits, such as the ability to sue for statutory damages and attorney fees in case of infringement.
- **Watermark Your Work:** Adding a watermark to digital versions of your poster can help deter unauthorized use and clearly indicate ownership.
- **Add Your Copyright Management Information (CMI):** CMI is the information you provide that notifies others you own the copyright to your poster. Adding your CMI can also strengthen your case should you need to sue a copyright infringer. There are two ways you can add your CMI:
  - **Simply add your copyright notice to a corner of your poster:** the copyright symbol, the year you published the poster, and your name (e.g., "© 2024 Your Name").
  - **For digital posters, embed your metadata into the digital versions of your poster.** It's easy to do, and if done correctly, it will trigger the Google Licensable Image Badge, notifying Google users that your poster is under copyright. There are great resources on metadata for Guild members and friends at [carlseibert.com/guild](https://carlseibert.com/guild).
- **Use Licensing Agreements:** When licensing your artwork, clearly outline the scope of use, duration, and compensation. A well-drafted agreement can prevent misunderstandings and protect your rights.



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## AVOIDING EXPLOITATION

- **Verify Contracts:** Always review contracts carefully. Look for terms regarding usage rights, compensation, and credit. Ensure that the contract aligns with your expectations and needs.
- **Keep Records:** Maintain detailed records of your work, including creation dates, licensing agreements, and correspondence. This documentation can be invaluable in disputes.
- **Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about your rights and industry standards. Knowing what is fair and legal can help you spot potential exploitation.

## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

- **Graphic Artists Guild:** The Graphic Artists Guild is dedicated to supporting visual artists, including poster artists, by providing resources, advocacy, and networking opportunities. Visit our website to learn more about how we can help you protect your rights and advance your career.
- **Copyright Alliance:** The Copyright Alliance works to protect the interests of copyright holders, including individual visual artists. They offer a great set of educational resources for creators, which you can bookmark at [copyrightalliance.org/education](http://copyrightalliance.org/education).
- **Copyright Office:** If you're looking to start registering your copyrights, the Copyright Office offers video tutorials that clearly explain which registration form to use and how to register your works. Once you get started, you'll find it's easy to do: [copyright.gov/registration/visual-arts](http://copyright.gov/registration/visual-arts).

A graphic with a blue and yellow background featuring stylized padlocks. The text 'Lock IT IN' is written in a large, red, cursive font, with 'IT IN' in a smaller, red, sans-serif font. Below this, the text '\$200/YEAR FOR 3 YEARS' is written in a large, red, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text 'of Community & Collaboration!' is written in a smaller, red, sans-serif font. A small version of the Graphic Artists Guild logo is positioned to the right of the 'IT IN' text.

**Lock  
IT IN**

**\$200/YEAR  
FOR 3 YEARS**

of Community  
& Collaboration!

## JOIN US TODAY!

Explore the benefits of becoming a member of the Graphic Artists Guild. Discover resources, connect with fellow artists, and receive support tailored to your needs. Take advantage of our free resources, including monthly events and comprehensive guides available on our website.

Visit the **Graphic Artists Guild Website** [graphicartistsguild.org](http://graphicartistsguild.org) to learn more and join.