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**Coalition of Canadian Art Professionals Releases Open Letter on Copyright**

***Over 500 Art Professionals Call for Balanced Copyright Laws***

Ottawa, ON – June 6, 2006 – Over 500 members of Canada’s art community have today released an open letter to the Ministers of Canadian Heritage and Industry calling on the Canadian government to adopt balanced copyright laws that respect the reality of contemporary artistic practice. *Appropriation Art, A Coalition of Art Professionals*, comprises artists, curators, arts organizations and art institutions who share a deep concern over Canada’s copyright policies and the impact these policies have on the creation and dissemination of contemporary art. The Coalition argues that Canada’s current copyright laws put at particular risk those artworks using appropriation, such as conceptual art, art video & film, sound art and collage.

The Coalition offers three principles that it argues must ground Canada’s copyright policy:

**FAIR ACCESS TO COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL LIES AT THE HEART OF COPYRIGHT.** Creators need access to the works of others to create. Legislative changes premised on the “need” to give copyright owners more control over their works must be rejected.

**ARTISTS AND OTHER CREATORS REQUIRE CERTAINTY OF ACCESS.** The time has come for the Canadian government to consider replacing fair dealing with a broader defense, such as fair use, that will offer artists the certainty they require to create.

**ANTI-CIRCUMVENTION LAWS SHOULD NOT OUTLAW CREATIVE ACCESS.** Laws that privilege technical measures that protect access to digital works must be rejected. The law should not outlaw otherwise legal dealings with copyrighted works merely because a digital lock has been used. Artists work with a contemporary palette, using new technology. They work from within popular culture, using material from movies and popular music. Contemporary culture should not be immune to critical commentary.

"Artworks that use appropriation have a long and well documented place in the history of Art" notes Sarah Joyce, a signatory to the Open Letter. "These works are collected and exhibited in major cultural institutions across Canada and throughout the world and yet artists express this form of creativity under threat of the law. To silence this valid form of creativity is tragic. That Canada's laws do so is simply wrong."

“Canada’s art community has not been consulted on the implications of possible copyright reforms,” states Gordon Duggan, another of the Open Letter’s signatories. “We are creators, and we rely on copyright laws for our livelihood. Yet, to my knowledge, the needs of Canadian artists have never been a consideration in copyright policy debates. It is time that changed. The sheer size and makeup of this coalition reflects the level of dissatisfaction within the artistic community. These changes are set to lock Canadian art into a very narrow idea of what the Government want art to be rather than reflecting the reality of contemporary Canadian art.”

The open letter has been posted at the Coalition’s website at [www.appropriationart.ca](http://www.appropriationart.ca).

**About The Coalition of Art Professionals:** The signatories to the Open Letter span the full range of Canada’s art community, and include artists, galleries, art institutions, and curators. A full list of the over 500 individuals and organizations lending their name to the Open Letter may be found at [www.appropriationart.ca](http://www.appropriationart.ca).

**For Further information, see:**

[www.appropriationart.ca](http://www.appropriationart.ca)

**The Coalition of Art Professionals Open Letter:**

[http:// www.appropriationart.ca/documents/open\\_letter.pdf](http://www.appropriationart.ca/documents/open_letter.pdf)

**French translation of Open Letter:**

[http:// www.appropriationart.ca/documents/open\\_letter-fr.pdf](http://www.appropriationart.ca/documents/open_letter-fr.pdf)

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