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5 Essential Steps Visual Artists Can Do to Prevent Art Theft Online

Our Friends · Wednesday, October 29th, 2025

A common threat that every visual artist (and their teams that work with them) face in 2025 is online art theft. Even if you have not been a victim of this, it is an issue that you are likely to be aware of. Fortunately, there are a few simple steps to prevent online art theft that will help you protect your work. Keep reading to find out more.

1. Understand the Digital Threat Landscape

First, you need to understand the digital threat landscape. In 2025, art theft online is no longer just about physical artworks: digital copying, unauthorized NFTs, scraping, and spoofing are all real risks. There are also concerns **surrounding AI models** being trained on artists' work, with campaigns being launched against the mass misuse of artists' content.

2. Secure Your Digital Workflow & Assets

Artists and their corporate partners (such as galleries, agencies, and studios), should implement good practices around file management, sharing, and publication. Deploying a robust **VPN for business** solution can help protect remote access to asset storage and prevent interception or data leakage when collaborators are working remotely or from public networks.

3. Employ Visible & Invisible Deterrents

Visible and invisible deterrents can involve watermarking (visible and invisible metadata), low-resolution preview versions for public websites, embedded copyright notices, and monitoring services. You can also set up alerts for unauthorized uses, allowing you to take timely action.

4. Define Contractual & Legal Protections

Make sure that your contracts stipulate rights, usage terms, indemnities, and enforcement obligations. This should be for contracts with clients, collaborators, and platforms. You should also familiarize yourself with US copyright law, with protection automatically applied when work is created and fixed in a tangible medium – this covers both the original artwork and digital illustrations. You do not need to register a copyright for your work with the **US Copyright Office**, but it can provide stronger legal standing if needed.

5. Monitor, Respond, & Iterate

Finally, you need to consider ongoing governance and understand that protection is not a one-time task – it requires ongoing effort. Set up monitoring systems like reverse image search, NFT marketplace scans, and social media checks to perform ongoing monitoring. You should also define workflows for takedown and remediation so that you can act swiftly. Measure the performance of your efforts by calculating how many infringements you find and how many are resolved – you should then feed this back into your prevention strategy.

Art theft is on the rise and is evolving rapidly, particularly with the use of AI and blockchain. Therefore, it is vital that artists and their teams know how to stay agile and are ready to respond. The above are the main steps that should be taken to protect your art in the modern era and should help you feel more confident in your ability to safeguard your creative work.

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This entry was posted on Wednesday, October 29th, 2025 at 5:18 pm and is filed under [Check This Out](#)

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