

My name is Robert Stuurman, I'm an Indigenous creator who has been practicing since 1994. My mother handed down the gift and taught me how to paint in a traditional style that is respectful of the spiritual aspect of the land. I am a Noongar and when I met my mother for the first time this gift was imparted to me. I did not have any desire to do Aboriginal art before that time.

Since 1994 I have developed various styles and have also been exploited in various ways. This is sad because when people hold on to certain works they are really taking on a curse which can see their whole life fall apart etc. I know this sounds superstitious and doesn't comply with rational thought.

I have one such painting that has become a burden to certain people where their marriage has broken up and their lifestyle is becoming disrupted. It is because I did not give that painting away and so I remain the spiritual gate keeper of the paintings I do.

Other paintings I have given or sold and that is fine because I know the spiritual value of my works and what is safe for people to have and what isn't.

The current law as it stands only recognise the copyright symbol which is a little 'c' inside a circle but has no real clout in a court of law. I have looked at patent rights rules and regulations etc and nothing covers the rights of an artist.

I really do think a system must be put in place as a type of register for Indigenous Artists. It is also because to protect the artist and also the consumer and those that lack respect for Indigenous culture.

One other thing is I don't do exhibitions anymore because of the way I am told how to be an artist. I know who I am and my works speak for themselves, this is not to sound arrogant but simply to give me space into exercising who I am and what I do.

Thank-you,

Robert Stuurman