



## Signatures

It is unlikely that, on balance, signatures could fall within the protection afforded to artistic works. Nor would signatures be protected as literary works as such protection does not apply to short titles or names, words and commonplace statements.

However, it is advisable to look at each situation individually and consider the use of the signature and whether any other copyright provisions or law might apply.

### **For instance:**

- a) Where a signature is reproduced from a work, and part of the work immediately surrounding that signature also appears in the new work there may be grounds for claiming that a substantial part of the original work has been copied on a qualitative test;
- b) Where a signature is placed on a work by another artist, this is clearly false attribution and possibly fraud;
- c) Where a signature is used on a product or goods this may suggest endorsement by the artist which may constitute "passing off";
- d) Signatures may be registered as trade marks and any unauthorised use liable to action by the owner of the trade mark.

Generally though, a reproduction of a signature will not be an infringement of copyright.

The content of this fact sheet is of benefit interest only and is not an exhaustive explanation of copyright protection and remedies for infringement. This fact sheet is not intended to apply to specific circumstances. The contents of this fact sheet should not therefore be regarded as constituting legal or other advice and should not be relied upon as such. In relation to any particular problem that you may have, you are advised to seek specific and specialist advice.