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## **Detroit Artist Sues Developer Over Nine-Story Mural *Artist's federal lawsuit seeks protection under Visual Artists Rights Act***

(DETROIT, MI) — In a showdown over the legal status of public art in the United States, artist Katherine Craig filed a lawsuit in federal court today, seeking protection under the Visual Artists Rights Act for her work *The Illuminated Mural*—a nine-story mural on the side of 2937 East Grand Boulevard in Detroit's North End. Craig has sued Princeton Enterprises, the building's current owner, asking the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan to grant an injunction barring the destruction or mutilation of her widely acclaimed artwork.

It's been called "maybe Detroit's most drop-dead gorgeous mural" by the *Detroit Free Press*. Since its creation in 2009, the 100-by-125-foot painting—with cascades of electric oranges, yellows, and reds streaming down a bright blue background—has become one of the city's most notable pieces of public art. Its abstract explosions of color reflect the sense of action and movement that Craig, who grew up in the city's underground arts scene, sees in Detroit today. Craig received a competitive grant from the College for Creative Studies to defray her costs in creating the large-scale work, and secured support from neighborhood groups and permission from the building's then-owner before embarking on the project.



Princeton's purchase of the building a year ago has put the future of *The Illuminated Mural* in danger. The developer unsuccessfully put the building up for auction last summer and threatened to convert the empty, Albert Kahn-designed facility into condos, destroying Craig's work in the process.

"*The Illuminated Mural* is an essential artwork, both for me as an artist and for the North End community," says Craig. "I'm bringing this lawsuit to stand up for the rights of artists everywhere, and for the interests of Detroit's creative entrepreneurs, like myself, who have invested in the arts, public art and art education."

Craig has turned to the Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA), a 1990 law that extends special legal provisions to visual artists. For works of recognized stature like *The Illuminated Mural*, the law prohibits any kind of distortion, mutilation, or destruction. VARA specifically extends protection to significant public murals that could not be removed from a building without being destroyed.

"The Visual Artists Rights Act flatly prohibits the destruction of significant public murals like this one," says Deepak Gupta, one of the lawyers representing Craig. "We're working to secure Katherine's rights and, in the process, to send a message to developers everywhere that they can't simply ignore the law on artists' rights."

Amy Keller, another one of Craig's lawyers, hopes the case sets a precedent in favor of preservation: "It is essential," says Keller, "that Detroit's artistic and cultural vibrancy not be lost as the city redevelops."

The complaint be viewed at the following link: <http://guptawessler.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Craig-VARA.pdf>

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