Jony Ive Leaves Apple

Written by Marco Attard
 02 July 2019

Jony Ive, the longtime Apple product designer behind the iconic aesthetic of what we think of as an "iDevice," announces his shock departure from the company after 30 years to start his own design firm.

The announcement comes through an interview with the Financial Times. Ive says that while he is transitioning to a new creative venture, a design firm dubbed LoveFrom, he will still be very much involved with Apple business, both before and after LoveFrom launches fully in 2020. In fact, Apple will be the very first client of the design company.

"While I will not be an [Apple] employee, I will still be very involved-- I hope for many, many years to come," Ive tells the FT. "This just seems like a natural and gentle time to make this change."

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In turn, Apple CEO Tim Cook says "Apple will continue to benefit from Jony's talents by working directly with him on exclusive projects, and through the ongoing work of the brilliant and passionate design team he has built. After so many years working closely together, I'm happy that our relationship continues to evolve and I look forward to working with Jony long into the future."

So far Apple has not named a replacement for the post of chief design officer. Instead, design team leaders Evans Hankey (VP of industrial design) and Alan Dye (VP of human interface design) will be reporting directly to COO Jeff Williams.

But why did Ive leave Apple? According to the FT interview, the two chief reasons are the completion of projects he was working closely on, such as Apple Park, and the state of the Apple design team. However, reports from both Bloomberg and the Wall Street Journal claim trouble is bubbling within Apple, with one anonymous "person close to Apple" telling Bloomberg designers are unhappy with working on mere "incremental updates to current products."

Both Bloomberg and the WSJ say Ive's departure was a long time coming, with Ive slowly dropping responsibilities since the 2015 Watch launch. Sources tell Bloomberg Ive was visiting Apple HQ as little as twice a week, while the WSJ insists Ive was both "dispirted" by Cook's hands-off attitude towards product development and increasingly frustrated by an Apple board populated by directors with backgrounds unrelated to the company's core business.

The Bloomberg and WSJ pieces also claim Apple is working on AR glasses "that would give users visual displays of messages and maps." But will it manage to create a successful product following the departure of what was arguably its star designer? The WSJ suggest it probably won't, since Ive's absence will only strain the cohesion of the design team further, causing the departure of more key members. Either way, we'll miss his appearances in Apple product launch events.

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