Apple bolsters its chip team by hiring architect who worked at ARM, Intel, AMD

Enlarge / Apple’s iPad Pro had a new, Apple-designed chip called the A12X that rivaled many high-end laptop CPUs in performance.

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Apple has hired an experienced CPU designer to join its team. Mike Filippo joined Apple last month with the title Architect, according to his LinkedIn profile. The move ends a decade spent at ARM, where he was lead architect on several chip products. Filippo also spent time working on CPUs at Intel and Advanced Micro Devices.

The hire is a big get for Apple. ARM is responsible for technology that powers the A series chips Apple has been using in its mobile devices. For instance, the A12X in the iPad Pro springboards off the big.LITTLE architecture from ARM.

“Mike was a long-time valuable member of the ARM community,” a representative from ARM told Bloomberg. “We appreciate all of his efforts and wish him well in his next endeavor.” Apple has not commented on the hire.

The industry has been buzzing for years now that Apple is interested in making CPUs for Macs. Filippo’s resume shows work on CPUs for desktop and mobile products, which means he

brings flexibility to Apple. But the company has not given any official statements about an in-house CPU for Macs, so we can only speculate about his exact role.

According to a Bloomberg report from April 2018, a plan for Macs with Apple-designed CPUs was allegedly greenlit by the company's leadership and could be behind products shipping as soon as 2020. The company's WWDC conference this year came and went without any mention of that rumored development, however. Whatever the date, the addition of Filippo's experience could be helpful in making progress on this plan that may or may not be happening.

It's also key to remember that, even though Apple building CPUs for Mac seems like a given, the company may be applying Filippo's skills to other places. A key architect behind Apple's A series mobile CPUs, Gerard Williams III, departed the company earlier this year, so Apple may be looking to Filippo to fill some part of that gap. Additionally, Apple has been a driving force in augmented reality and is reportedly interested in new hardware that would center on AR and VR. That's a space where making its own processor would also be deeply useful.

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