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Former litigation rivals unite at Newport Beach IP boutique

Erica Van Loon's move from Nixon Peabody to Armond Wilson brings copyright, trademark and media litigation expertise to the firm's practice.

By Douglas Saunders

Daily Journal Staff Writer

Two intellectual property litigators who once squared off as adversaries in a pandemic-era patent fight have now joined forces, uniting complementary practices at a Newport Beach litigation boutique focused on high-stakes disputes.

Erica Van Loon, formerly of Nixon Peabody, has joined Armond Wilson, the IP litigation firm led by founders Michelle Armond and Douglas Wilson, to lead their new practice group. Her arrival brings together a practice spanning copyright, trademark and media litigation with the firm's core patent and high-tech work, expanding the boutique to eight attorneys.

The partnership grew out of a high-stakes patent case, when Van Loon and Armond found themselves on opposite sides of the courtroom.

"Michelle and I have a very interesting story," Van Loon said. "We were opposing counsel on a patent litigation case approximately six years ago. I got to see Michelle in action, and she was a formidable opponent – smart, tough, and professional. We had a hard-fought litigation that ended up eventually settling."

Armond said the professional respect was immediate, even amid the pressures of contentious litigation.

"The fact that Erica and I have gone from opponents to law partners is a high compliment to Erica's courtroom skill. Even when we were battling it out, we respected each other," Armond said. "I'm delighted that Erica and I will now be on the same team."

Van Loon joins the firm following a string of recent successes. In a copyright infringement dispute involving the owner of ReelShort's 60- to 90-second episodic films, she defeated summary judgment and positioned the case for settlement before trial. *New Leaf Publishing, Inc. v. Top Innovations LLC, et al.*, 2:24-cv-4676 (C.D. Cal., filed June 4, 2024).



Erica J. Van Loon, Douglas Wilson, Michelle Armond | photo credit: Nicole Caldwell

She also prevailed for defendant video gaming influencer Typical Gamer, defeating a preliminary injunction motion in what she described as a case of first impression involving user-generated content within Fortnite's online video game. *MM Games v. Rebelo-Soares, et al.*, 2:25-cv-1969 (C.D. Cal., filed March 6, 2025).

In addition, Van Loon secured judgments and permanent injunctions for video game developers in the Northern District of Illinois, in-

cluding WeMade Max Co. Ltd., Madngine Inc., and UbiFun Inc.

Armond said Van Loon's work reflects the increasingly public-facing nature of modern IP disputes.

"Erica has a unique practice that is at the cutting edge of copyright and trademark, and particularly as they impact social media and streaming platforms," Armond said. "Her cases are not just playing out in the court of law –

they're also being played out in the court of public opinion.”

That visibility, Armond added, extends to Van Loon's advocacy beyond the courtroom.

“Erica is a pro at navigating issues of copyright and trademark law and how they translate into the online creator world and social media. Her media savvy sets her apart, and so the litigation does not disturb, and in fact enhances, her client's brand,” Armond said. “I cannot think of anybody in the country who is working at this level of sophistication to audiences in both the courtroom and the online chatrooms.”

Van Loon's path to IP litigation was shaped early by her mother, Adrian Pruetz, a former Morrison & Foerster partner who founded the intellectual property group at Quinn Emanuel.

“My mom was my number one mentor,” Van Loon said. “I've been litigating since I was born. Every time I wanted to leave the house, go to a party, or stay out late, I had to state my case. I'd have to argue it, come with authority, and be persuasive.”

From about 2007 to 2011, Van Loon and Pruetz operated their own IP litigation boutique, successfully handling high-stakes IP litigation in the district courts and 9th Circuit, and prevailing in a patent case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

“Erica's mom is a legend and true pioneer in IP litigation,” Armond said. “I remember encountering her when I was just starting my career at Irell & Manella. She is a tough cookie, and Erica is so lucky to have apprenticed with her.”

Van Loon said the move from Nixon Peabody's roughly 650 attorneys to a boutique setting aligns with how she prefers to practice, noting her prior experience running a small firm.

“I've been in a big firm, and I've been in a small firm,” Van Loon said. “The way I like to work is in small, dedicated teams on my cases. I think that's what benefits clients the most – you want every attorney on the team to know the case forwards and backwards.”

Armond Wilson co-founder Douglas Wilson said the boutique model allows for sharper focus on client needs.

“If you really want to put clients first, you need to be at a small firm,” Wilson said. “Big firms have a lot of institutional roadblocks. The past seven years have been so effective at achieving win after win for our clients, and that's why our practice is growing so rapidly.”

Both Van Loon and Armond pointed to mentorship as a defining feature of their practices, noting that former associates they trained now hold partnerships across the AmLaw 100.

“Building the next generation is a big part of our profession,” Van Loon said. “As a litigator, you can't do these cases by yourself – you have to have a team you can trust and rely on, and you have to train them.”

Looking ahead, Van Loon said she sees the partnership as a platform for continued growth.

“I'm really looking forward to growing the top IP litigation boutique, not just in California, but the nation, with Michelle and Doug,” she said. “The sky is the limit.”

douglas_saunders@dailyjournal.com