

## Couture & paste

By JAMES COVERT

*Last Updated:* 3:32 AM, October 31, 2012

*Posted:* 10:25 PM, October 30, 2012

Chris Burch has been tangling over trademarks lately — and not just with his ex.

The prolific retail entrepreneur, whose ex-wife Tory Burch has accused his new C. Wonder chain of mimicking her candy-colored clothes and cluttered store designs, last week settled charges of copyright infringement from a Los Angeles artist, according to court documents.

The legal truce is an embarrassment for Chris Burch as he is looking to fend off high-stakes charges that he's suffering from a copycat habit.

This Friday, lawyers for Tory Burch are expected to sue C. Wonder for allegedly pilfering the preppy, bohemian look and merchandise of the Tory Burch retail brand. Founded by the now-estranged couple in 2004..the fast-growing label is valued at north of \$2 billion.

Sources said Tory Burch's lawyers are expected to cite a slew of designs and details allegedly ripped off by C. Wonder, including its clunky jewelry and ornate, brass-lettered logos used to decorate belts, shoes, wallets and handbags.

Under an agreement whose terms couldn't immediately be learned, C. Wonder last week settled charges from Bulgarian-born artist Zlatka Paneva.

In federal court in Los Angeles, Paneva had accused the company of knocking off a series of her whimsical collages to make a line of plastic plates and party trays.

In one example, a C. Wonder serving tray is decorated with the image of an elephant being hoisted by a bunch of heart-shaped balloons, set against the backdrop of a torn-out dictionary page.

The similarity between the images is so close that C. Wonder's challenge to the legal validity of Paneva's copyright on the images was likely its only chance, said Michael Goldberg, a partner at Pryor Cashman who specializes in intellectual property law.

"C. Wonder is a very creditable and established player in the apparel business, and they ought to know better," Goldberg told The Post.

The lawyer added that the case isn't a point in C. Wonder's favor as it girds for its bigger battle with Tory Burch.

Still, "you never want to demonstrate a pattern of disregarding people's intellectual-property rights." Goldberg said.

Lawyers for Paneva, who had demanded that C. Wonder fork over its profits from the alleged knockoffs and compensate her for lost business, declined to comment yesterday.

Reps of Chris Burch, who has argued that he's entitled under corporate rules to compete with the Tory Burch brand, didn't respond to a request for comment.

In a pre-emptive strike earlier this month, Chris Burch accused his ex of blocking his efforts this year to sell a 28-percent stake in Tory Burch — a deal that could reap a bonanza approaching \$600 million.

The Carlyle Group, a Washington-based private-equity giant, is said to be among the prospective bidders, according to banking sources.

Burch likewise has accused his former wife of pressuring suppliers and landlords not to do business with C. Wonder.

[jcovert@nypost.com](mailto:jcovert@nypost.com)