The Sandbox, a metaverse world that has attracted labels like Gucci and Adidas, has announced it is joining Arianee, a consortium specialised in blockchain solutions for consumer brands. The goal is to enable customers buying a physical product from a label to receive its virtual NFT equivalent.

The Arianee consortium has some forty members, among them Paris Fashion Week and the Richemont group, and brands like Mugler, Breitling, Ba&sh, IWC and IBM. Its key service is a blockchain solution that enables brands to create and track an NFT-based virtual identity card for each of their products. The token acts as a certificate of authenticity, and will be ceded by its owner once they sell the product in question.

The Sandbox is the first metaverse player to join Arianee. The aim is to allow consumers who own an NFT for a physical product they bought, like an item of clothing or a fashion accessory, to use it to outfit their customised avatar in the virtual world. More broadly, the goal is to extend the omni-channel purchasing experience beyond physical boundaries and into the metaverse. And to allow labels to stage events reserved exclusively for their customers in The Sandbox. The latter has already attracted names like Adidas Originals, Gucci (with its online space Vault), Carrefour, Leader Price (owned by the Casino group), Warner Music Group, Ubisoft and Atari.

"An avatar is the first element that allows most users to enter and interact with the metaverse,” said the managing director of The Sandbox, Sebastien Borget. “To have an individual identity and style is important in the metaverse. Wearing one's favourite label and upgrading one's virtual avatar are key features that will make our experience even more special," he added. According to Arianee's CEO Pierre-Nicolas Hurstel, the collaboration will enable
The Sandbox visitors to “travel seamlessly between immersive physical and digital worlds.” He added that “we will soon witness the emergence of new user experiences.”

The Sandbox has teamed up with Arianee at a time when a number of metaverse worlds are vying for recognition. Users can visit these virtual landscapes with their personal avatars, via a screen or a VR headset. Each metaverse extends over a finite area, and private individuals and businesses can buy land on it to build their own premises or set up a game or event they have designed. This has fuelled a real estate rush on metaverse worlds like Roblox, Cryptovoxels, The Sandbox and Decentraland, which a few days ago staged the first Metaverse Fashion Week. The latter has raised the issue of how this world can be made accessible to a wider public, and of the potential clientèle the virtual fashion world can tap (you can read about the Metaverse Fashion Week here).

Arianee is competing with other protocols, like GoodsID and Aura (the latter developed by the LVMH group), and has not waited for a metaverse leader to emerge. Each metaverse is currently functioning as a separate entity: NFTs of virtual avatar outfits that work in one world do not do so in another, whose graphic quality is also likely to be different. There exist in fact interoperability issues which are making brands prudent in their web 3.0 investments. By facilitating the match between real and virtual products, Arianee is expecting to step up the pace of development, and give The Sandbox a lead on others.

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