

Première partie de l'épreuve**After Grand Theft Auto and Minecraft, Balenciaga: The Video Game?**

The fashion house has created a game to showcase its latest collection, and everyone can play.

The year is 2031. Cities are concrete jungles crossed by flying buses that can twist in space and populated by avatars in oversize puffers and shredded jeans that resemble antique draperies over windows to interior worlds. They gesture toward posters promoting a secret rave-party in a watery wood that leads to a red rock desert where a woman in silver armor pulls a sword from a stone.

Shopping as the gateway to the dystopian future? Welcome to Balenciaga, fall 2021: the collection video game. Balenciaga's video game, titled Afterworld: the Age of Tomorrow, is not, actually, the first video game created to showcase a collection. That would be Collina Land, from Collina Strada, which was revealed last month as part of Guccifest, the brand-sponsored short film festival featuring work from 15 independent brands.

And it also probably won't be the last since fashion has been flirting with the gaming world for a while now. Burberry launched its most recent show on the livestreaming platform Twitch, and Dior Men is doing the same with its pre-fall collection later this week. Louis Vuitton designed custom skins and a trophy case for the battle arena game League of Legends.

And truth is, Afterworld isn't even that much of a game: The interactivity involves simply "walking" through the five levels of the environment, following a predetermined path, a task someone who has never played Fortnite or even Animal Crossing can complete without too much stress. Stopping, perhaps, along the way to take a closer look at the clothes worn by the various scanned-in models, the only real free choice on offer.

25 The news release that accompanied the experience called it “a hero’s journey,” though
there are no challenges to overcome, no doors to decide upon, no enemies to battle.
You can’t really lose. Well, maybe it’s true that just getting through the day right now is
enough.

Besides, what Afterworld does offer is a next step: a detailed immersive environment,
even more comprehensive than the environments that the designer Demna Gvasalia
30 has been increasingly effective at creating with his in-person shows, the better to frame
the clothes he is making and illuminate their effect.

One of the big questions when viewing a collection is always: Where did that idea come
from? In this case, Afterworld paints a pretty clear picture of the answer. Ten years in
the future, this is where Mr. Gvasalia thinks we could be.

35 The last physical show Mr. Gvasalia held was set in a cavernous warehouse, the air
scented with gaseous lime, the walls lined with stadium seating, the runway a watery
river under a LED ceiling roiled with storm clouds and flames. Afterworld, which was
preceded by a virtual runway parade viewed through VR glasses, is an imaginative
iteration of the same idea, built for the socially distanced present. And by taking the
40 clothes off the runway and actually putting them on a street, albeit a surreal one, it also
shows how good they might look in the world.

Adapted from the New York Times, Vanessa Friedman, December 7, 2020