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Five indictments in Paris for the theft of NFTs worth an estimated \$2.5 million

They would have fraudulently recovered the property of NFT, including the heads of *Bored Ape monkeys*, prized by stars like Neymar, the American rapper Eminem or Paris Hilton

By Le Figaro with AFP

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These avatars of monkeys, which appear in the profile picture of their owners on the social networks Twitter or LinkedIn, have become both a mark of belonging to a VIP community and an outward sign of wealth. *Ascannio / stock.adobe.com*

Five people were indicted on Wednesday in Paris, suspected of having formed a network fraudulently recovering the ownership of elements of a "particularly prized" collection of NFTs, these certificates of authenticity linked to digital objects, indicated the Paris prosecutor's office to AFP. These

investigation opened this Wednesday for fraud in an organized gang, laundering of this offense and association of criminals.

They would have fraudulently recovered between the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 the ownership of these NFTs, in particular the heads of *Bored Ape* monkeys, whose value is estimated at 2.5 million dollars, according to the same source. The Paris prosecutor's office said it opened an investigation on August 23 into these NFT thefts, entrusted to the Central Office for the Fight against Crime Related to Information and Communication Technologies (OCLCTIC).

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Christophe Durand, the deputy head of this service, explained to AFP that the investigation had started " at the *end of 2021 on the initiative* ", by observing the investigations on the internet concerning these alleged thefts carried out by an Internet user.

Under the pseudonym of ZachXBT, this Internet user looked into “ *the irritations of the community of owners of the limited series of Bored Ape Yacht Club monkeys*”, specified Christophe Durand. PSG footballer Neymar, American rapper Eminem and Paris Hilton have already displayed their membership in this circle.

The modus operandi described was as follows: the individuals declared via a website to the owners of these NFTs that they could transform their static digital works of art into animated files. A phishing site was allegedly hiding behind, leading victims to unknowingly handing over their NFT handover codes.

According to the Paris prosecutor's office, five victims have been identified, one of whom would have had 3 NFTs stolen on her own, for damages estimated at 2.5 million dollars. One of these monkeys alone would be worth close to a million dollars. The OCLCTIC placed seven people in police custody on Monday, five young people born between 1998 and 2003, living in Paris, Caen and Tours, and the parents of one of them, according to the Paris prosecutor's office. According to the prosecution, the parents of one of the

Among the five indicted, two are suspected of having made the site and the marketing, and three others of having done the advertising and the money laundering operations, according to Christophe Durand. Two of these five young men, already identified by the ZachXBT investigation, are considered central by the courts. The Paris public prosecutor's office took requisitions for their placement in pre-trial detention against them.

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