On Friday afternoon, in a closed-off gallery at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, teams of workers, some in lab coats and shoe covers, were circling through a makeshift village of stark white huts, fixing mannequins and laying down guide numbers. It was the homestretch before the Costume Institute’s spring show, “Rei Kawakubo/Comme des Garçons: Art of the In-Between,” was set to open, and the pieces that Ms. Kawakubo has designed over decades for Comme des Garçons, the fashion label she founded in 1969, waited for their final installation.

It is usually a safe assumption that the exhibitions will be filled with garments, but what Ms. Kawakubo creates is not all ing. The pieces may or bulging; tatty or not make allowances for their wearer’s arms, or vanity.

Many designers making women look seems to work with en look again.

Ms. Kawakubo appeared in the Met gallery on Friday, of fringed bob and jacket, a day after where she lives Garçons has its Officially, Ms. speak English, comm- instructions via her company president, she understands more than she lets on, and if sufficiently interested or engaged, will lean forward to address an English speaker directly. Mostly, her silence seems useful and convenient, as it discourages two things she abhors: explanation and interpretation. (She will never offer more insight, publicly, into any of her collections than the enigmatic title she gives each one.)

“Doing something new doesn’t necessarily have to be beautiful in the eyes of the people who look at it,” she said. “The result of doing something new is beautiful. The fact of doing something new and people being moved by it is what’s beautiful.”