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Out of Fashion

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A still from Boudicca's short film "Living in Time."

After blockbusters like the Metropolitan Museum of Art's [Alexander McQueen exhibition](#), visitors to "[Fashioning the Object](#)," which opens April 14 at the Art Institute of Chicago, might be inspired to ask, "Um, so where's the fashion?" But that would no doubt come as a compliment to Bless, Boudicca and Sandra Backlund, the unconventional and fiercely independent designers who were selected by the show's curator, Zoë Ryan, because their work "challenges the fashion system and speaks to the time in which it is made." Three immersive environments highlight behind-the-scenes aspects of the creative process. The Boudicca designers Zowie Broach and Brian Kirkby have provided 25 to 30 of their conceptual short films. The Bless component will feature Desiree Heiss and Ines Kaag's signature look books — using friends as models and distributed in publications like *Monthly Vampire Magazine* — and surreal hybrid objects like the "Hairbrush." And Backlund will be represented by light-infused abstractions of her sculptural, handmade knits printed on 11-foot scrims, which underscore her emotional connection to her work. Says Ryan: "I'm curious to see what people will make of it."