If couture is the laboratory of fashion then its most forward-thinking scientists tend to present their experiments on the final day of season.

That was very much the case this Thursday, when a quartet of creators – only one of whom was actually in Paris – showed free-thinking and free-flowing fashion that broke new ground as much in the mode and materials as in their concepts and stylistic concoctions.

Yuima Nakazato: Threadless couture
Few were more out there when it comes to fabrics than Yuima Nakazato, a Japanese talent who works with brewed protein and bio-smocking to make three-dimensional structures.

“In between humans and clothes there’s an invisible memory,” intones the unseen narrator on his show video, before bucolic images of sea, wave, foam and shoreline shot in Hawaii.

Themed around the concept of Atlas, the video was also a conversation with just one figure, Lauren Wasser, the activist model who lost both her legs due to toxic shock syndrome caused by a tampon.

Attired in a simple T-shirt with pearl button collar, Wasser speaks of drawing strength from the sea. “Do you think fashion will ascend to a new level by merging with the medical field?” enquires the film.

“Having two legs and then having the legs I have now I can definitely tell you that technology has been instrumental to the woman I have become,” Wasser responds as the camera pans down her high-tech artificial lower limbs.

“We are all going to need some sort of technology to advance us in the future and I am just ahead of the curve. Yeah, I’m the future,” Wasser smiles.

Entitled 'Craftmanship: Encapsulated Reminiscence,' Nakazato’s big idea for the collection this season was Boro - clothes made from fragments previously worn by hundreds of people.

“Inheriting the spirit of Boro, I merged it with modern technology. Spiders have developed a way to restore the structure of its thread, transformed by water,” explained Yuima, an Antwerp fashion school grad, who launched his own marque right out of college.

Showing his ideas of form-fitting fabrics in intricate stripes, seen floating in a Damien Hirst-style water tank before Wasser appeared as the most wondrous figure in psychedelic clothes that looked biological spun rather than sewn. Accordion pleat gloves, and tarantula shapes all the way to sci-fi empress head gear.

“Lauren Wasser’s life overlaps with our difficult era, since our era needs regeneration. And her ability to overcome life’s difficulties represents that need,” explained Yuima, in a Zoom from his studio in hipster Shibuya.
neighborhood of Tokyo.

Chez Nakazato a single dress can be transformed into multiple designs.

“You can create eight looks from one dress, since there are no threads it’s very, very malleable,” smiled Nakazato, whose mood board was a collage of landscape and cultures and faces, in what he called an “oversampling of abstract art and fashion.

Aelis: Spiders on LSD

Spiders also played a role at Aelis, where designer Sofia Crociani was inspired by seeing pictures of ’60s scientific research into spider under the influence of drugs – alcohol, coffee and LSD and the webs they spun.

“The results were incredible and came from something they couldn’t control,” explained Crociani, who spent lockdown in the gentle cultivated Tuscan hills of Val d’Orcia.
In the peaceful countryside starting to think about by nature and insects, and discovering in these images the incredible structures they managed to spin.

“So my message is related to ecology. How we must start to decolonize nature. With Covid the conscience of that has grown,” explained Crociani.

The idea presented with webs of lace woven onto barely-there cocktails; or a rouched prairie dress with added tulle top, the shape askew like a drug-addled insect.

All worn by models who made spiderlike gestures, in a video shot by Jacopo Godani inside the Paris gallery of Suzanne Tarasieve; filmed in one day before two great canvases of Georg Baselitz. “An incredible artist who also thought about losing control,” opined the couturier in a pre-show Zoom.

Rahul Mishra: From Taj to Raj
Rahul Mishra got the initial jolt for his collection from watching David Attenborough’s acclaimed new series Blue Planet II, and the result was a frequently exquisite collection and visual love song to nature.

Entitled 'Dawn,' it was shot in the best location of the Paris haute couture season, deep inside a pristine marble quarry in Rajasthan that looked like a lunar landscape. The same type of marble used in the making of the Taj Mahal; and like the Mughal empresses buried in the hat mausoleum, these models looked like rather divine princesses.

Mishra’s key concept was using magic rings and mushroom shapes of swatches of crochet fabrics that were then sewn into dense clouds of color. Seen in bouffant shirt-length cocktails; and cocktails composed as if of undulating valleys of sequins. All worn by models lying on the immense dusty white vista.

Mishra quoted Alice Walker, the poet author of The Color Purple, saying: “In nature nothing is perfect.” Yet there was a true sense of perfection about this collection’s stunning embellishments – tiny, delicate silk flowers sewn on to nobly exotic tulle columns or fabulous femme fatale flamenco dresses.

Ultimately, the message was the absolute need to expand the mindscape, even as humankind continues to destroy our planet.

At the huge petal fantasy at the finale – his trio of mesmerizing models, Laura Gavrilenko, Mansi, and Nitin Baranwal – gather to perch themselves on driftwood tree trunks. First-rate styling by Priyanka Yadav and a vision Sir David would surely have loved.

Sterling Ruby: Californian shaman-chic
Artist Sterling Ruby and his oddly named brand, S.R. Studio. LA. Ca., made their couture debut, albeit from LA and in a collection that bore a tenuous connection to the metier of haute couture.

Named Apparitions, Ruby’s collection featured funky beauties marching across the wrecked concrete foundations of a forgotten paint-ball park in California. Which could almost have been a Ruby art installation.

Some in mottled velvet high-neck faintly puritanical columns; others in acid-dyed splotchy, mucky and streaky print denim jeans, cabans and colonial bonnets. That probably doesn’t sound too good, but the image packed plenty of impact, especially when the material wrapped around several overzised rhomboid briefcases.

Shot on Jan. 19, the last full day of Trump’s presidency, the program notes of the collection’s video explained it was a meditation on America’s vision of itself as divinely ordained. Even if it was hard to get that from just looking at the clothes.

There were mannish pantsuits in oversized orange check and a red version bearing black panels of script, ideal for an art gallery opening or to wear with a backstage pass. While Sterling’s shards of wool mop jackets, Instagram cocktails and wacky totes finished in balls of wool that referenced his own textile art work.

Ruby’s first steps in high fashion were his collabs with Raf Simons while at Calvin Klein. Quite frankly he has a very distant claim to being a designer, never mind a couturier.

“There is steel in the air and there is blood on the wheels… For the promise of water I will walk on my knees,” by Michael Gira of folk-rock band Angels of Light in the dirge-like soundtrack.

Californian shaman-chic rather than haute couture, but why not? It is the laboratory of fashion and Sterling did carry out a few experiments.

By Godfrey Deeny