ALFRED JENSEN
In his “Number Paintings,” Jensen does his best to relocate digits from their Western lodgings in science to realms of mysticism, religion, and chance. Grids with bright-colored squares and hand-painted numbers recall minimalist systems and arcane mathematical equations but also reference concepts as diverse as growth-hormone research, the Mayan calendar, and Goethe’s color theory. There’s more than a little pretension involved in this kind of wide-angle pseudo-philo-sophizing, but the works here, created between 1960 and 1980, balance that with visual, painterly rewards. Thickly impastoed, gestural, and quirky, they remind us that painting can ruff on mathematics and still engage the opposite side of the brain. Through Oct. 28. (PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-929-7000.)

GEORGE MACIUNAS
Maciunas (1931-78) is best known as a leading member of the sixties Fluxus movement. The charts, diagrams, films, documents, and articles here bear some marks of Fluxus—particularly the lo-fi, D.I.Y. elements—but they also draw heavily on Maciunas’s personal history and heritage (his mother was Russian, his father Lithuanian). The “Atlas of Russian History” is a painstakingly drawn series of history-book maps diagramming the progress of Russian history in 732 C.E. Similarly, the “Biography Chronologis Activity Between 1939-1978” and “Diagram of Historical Development of Faction” serve as conceptual self-portraits. Others, like his English and Chinese art-history outlines, look like final-exam study notes but function as simultaneously didactic and user-friendly art. Through Oct. 28. (Stendhal, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-366-1549.)

JOE SOLA
For previous projects, Sola has jumped out of windows, been tossed by football players, and ridden a roller coaster with porn stars; here, he turns his attention to a seemingly benign medium, with a show titled “Let’s Go Do Some Watercolor Painting.” His small, waxy pictures depict a bouquet of microphones, things he wouldn’t want to step on (banana peel, rake, kitchen packet), and trophies and ribbons for also-rans and failures. Their low-tech deadpan irony is reiterated by a marvelous goofy video, made with the playwright Will Eno, in which Sola portrays an anodyne public-access TV painting instructor who meets with an unlikely accident. Existence and humor, the laughing inducing lurch of a surprise: Sola doesn’t seem to see much difference between watercolor paint and the roller coaster. Through Nov. 14. (Bespoke, 547 W. 22nd St. 212-255-2111.)

“SMALL SCULPTURE”
Size matters, but the real action here is in the relationships set up between objects, both present and absent. Robert Gober’s hyper-illusionistic paint cast can cast in lead crystal and carefully colored recalls Jasper Johns’s beer cans—although Johns is represented here by sculpture from a series of lightings, such as the bronze, Vija Celmins’s fur-lined box filled with Plexiglas puzzle pieces recalls Meret Oppenheim’s iconic fur-trimmed teal at MOMA. And Charles Ray’s tiny “Handheld Wall,” a painted steel sculpture of an avian embryo, recalls Brancusi’s bird’s. With so many points of reference bouncing around, the notion of size is practically inconsequential—until one takes into account how much can be accomplished when the pressure of creating something monumental is suspended. Through Oct. 28. (Marks, 525 W. 24th St. 212-243-0200. Through Nov. 29.)

Short List

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN
LILLIAN BASSMAN
Bassman, one of the mainstays of Harper’s Bazaar in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, shows new photographs that borrow freely from her past. The largest of the most striking pieces here combine reworked fashion photography with close-up views of flowers in elegant, exuberant dipyches. Bassman’s signature style is intimate and impressionistic; using darkroom manipulation or distorting glass, she softens and abstracts her subjects, zeroing in on an essence that feels lush, liquid, and intensely feminine. A series of smaller flower photos, all made this year, serves as vivid footnotes. Through Oct. 28. (Staley Wise, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-6223.)

MARY MISS
Miss shows irregularly shaped black-and-white photo-collages that could be studies for the architecture of sculpture and public-art projects that are her primary work. Her subject is usually a strange dancer who is awoken—a partially collapsed pile, clinging to a pool, beached beside a concert court—that she has multiplied and reconfigured into sprawling, imaginary spaces. The dancer’s stream of water fish trap proliferate madly until all sense of function has been oblitered. Using a Cubist-style, cut-and-paste technique reminiscent of Gordon Matta-Clark and David Ireland, Miss realizes the sculptural potential of the ordinary built environment and invites us to see through her eyes. Through Nov. 22. (Senior & Shopmaker, 21 E. 26th St. 212-213-6767.)

DANCE
AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE

SANKAI JUKO
In “Kageki” (2000), the Paris-based Butoh company’s fourth work to appear at BAM in a decade, everything is bathed in white chalk dust; the seven dancers’ robes, their shaved heads, their mask-like faces—even the stage. The Japanese-born choreographer Ushio Amagatsu’s series of seven stunningly beautiful tableaux was inspired by an ikebana arrangement, and a collection of lotus leaves hang above the dancers, echoing the movement below. Floating, weightless, otherworldly, with a score by Takashi Kako and Yoichiro Yoshikawa. (Howard Gilman Opera House, 50 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Oct. 24 and Oct. 26-27 at 7:30 and Oct. 29 at 3.)

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