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HALEAKALA, INC.

59 WOOSTER

NEW YORK,

NEW YORK

10012

(212) 925-3615

APPEARANCES AND DISAPPEARANCES

Jean Nuchtern

Mary Overlie
The Kitchen

59 Wooster St. (Oct. 10-14)

I had a hard yet rewarding time keeping up with many of the structural changes in Mary Overlie's *Hero*. One of the issues she plays with is to set up an idea and then surround it with different frames of reference, presenting the same concept in a variety of contexts. This visual theme-and-variation format is accentuated by Overlie's use of silence.

During the first part of the work, a trio, wearing pastel work suits, and 12 dancers, dressed in bright yellow, ochre and green suits, perform simultaneously in different areas of the loft. While the members of the trio repeat somersaults and lift each other, the larger group executes simple foot and arm patterns in unison. Overlie seems to be examining counterpoint here: how a mass of dancers looks next to a small trio; how unison movement reverberates against individual steps; how a simple movement like a walk looks against a more complex

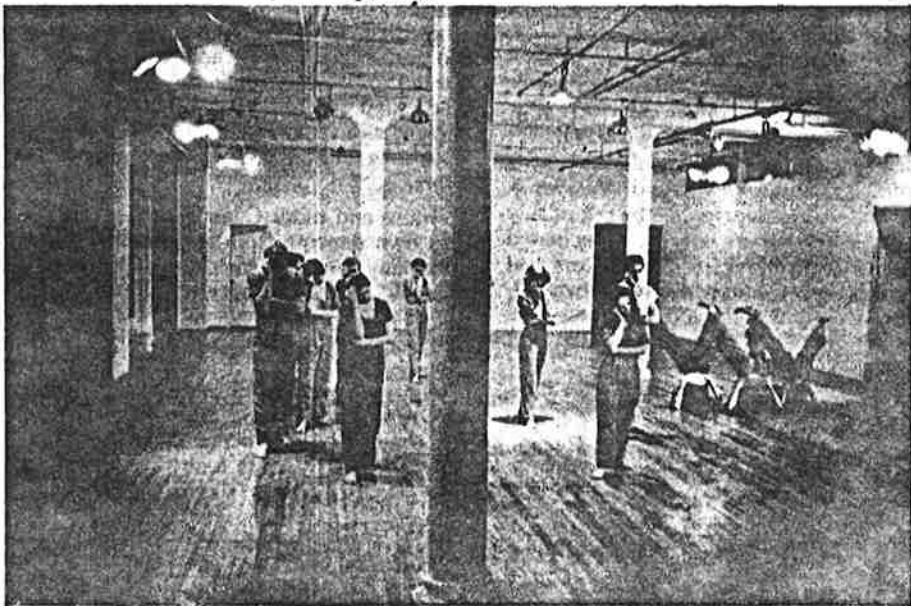
phrase, as when two dancers hoist a third across their stomachs; and so on. Overlie then alters the counterpoint. The trio stops its separate explorations and merges with the group, but I had a hard time making the transition. I kept seeing the trio as they'd been before, as an entity, and even when I began to let go of this image, I saw them as three individuals surrounded by a mass. Finally, I experienced the trio as part of the group, but recognizing all the phases I went through to wipe away their imprint made me admire Overlie for so forcefully setting up "trio-ness."

Overlie continues to play with the formal possibilities of trio and group. The 12 disappear while the three dancers, now alone except for one performer stretched out on the floor, embellish their previous partnering configurations — broadening the space and softening the movement. I didn't miss the group the way I missed the first trio. Perhaps Overlie was teaching me how to let go sooner. What I focused on in this section was the way Wendell Beavers, Nina Martin and Joanne Tilleman move like cats — their bodies have no sharp edges.

When the group comes back and Overlie reveals even more formal patterns, I admire the way she makes this work intellectually stimulating and visually rich, setting up a kaleidoscope of movement textures. The trio merges again into the center of the crowd and at first they do the same, then patterns slightly different from the other dancers. The three leave, sit and relax upstage while the others, in contrast to the casual stances of the trio, enact gestural phrases

like putting their index fingers to their temples as if worried, combing their hair with their hands and so on. These gestures that depict mundane activities contrast also with the group's earlier formal patterns.

I don't know what Overlie means by calling the work *Hero*. I sense an irony between the work's small movements and the larger-than-life implications of the word. What the spaces are between small and heroic, I've no idea. •



Mary Overlie's *Hero*