

## Fascinating Fragments:

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Amy Taubin

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Two films by Ericka Beckman

Ericka Beckman, who is easily one of the most interesting young filmmakers around, showed two films, *White Man Has Clean Hands* and a new untitled film, at the Kitchen last week. Both films are in Super-8. I don't think Beckman wants to continue working in Super-8, where the disadvantages of poor print quality and difficult projection outweigh the advantages of lower costs and lighter, more mobile cameras. She just can't afford 16mm. And that's a pity.

Each film is about 20 minutes long. Their structures are episodic and associative. The fragments are connected through color, lines and shapes, through the rhythm of the movements, and occasionally through incident or action. The lighting is highly controlled. There are many complicated opticals.

Both films evoke an uneasy apprehension, punctuated with a kind of nervous giddiness. The apprehension results from a seemingly clear and often diagrammatic iconography placed paradoxically within a shifting and highly ambiguous space; from the use of sound (particularly in the "White Man" film) which announces the immanent arrival of resolutions which never appear; and from certain of the images themselves which suggest a substructure of violence surfacing only for brief moments; flames and a woman screams, a woman falls out a just opened door at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

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The images are mysterious and hermetic. Among the most extraordinary is one of a woman shaking out her laundry and throwing it piece by piece out the window followed by a pan from this interior to the space outside the window where the same white cloths again billow into the night sky.

The films have something akin to both the films of George Landow and some French surrealist films of the '20's. But Beckman has a strongly defined and unique vision of her own. I hope she can get started working in 16mm very soon.

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