

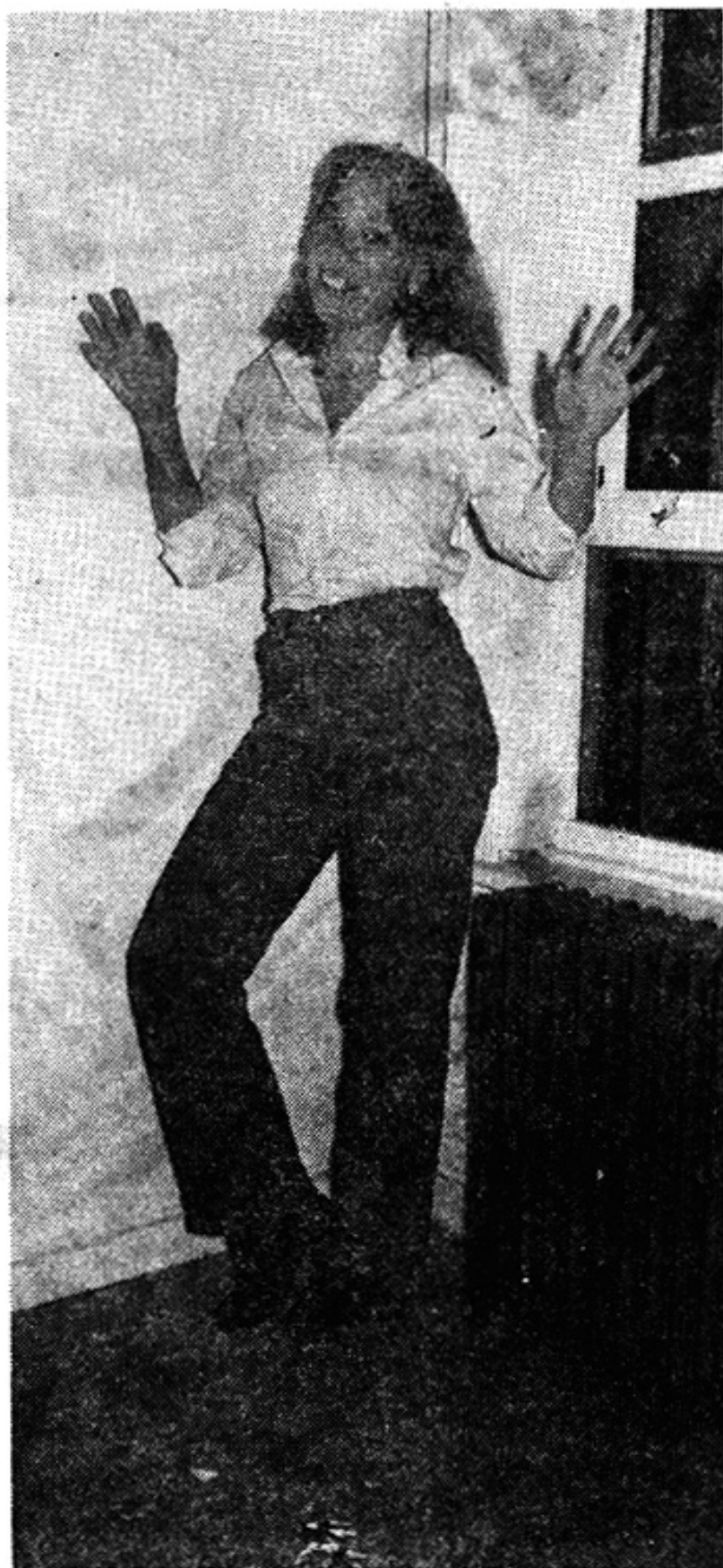
Voice Vanguard '79

Ericka Beckman

It's not always clear what Ericka Beckman's post-conceptual super-8 "musicals" are about but they project a world that is all her own. Beckman, 27, studied film at Disney-funded Cal Arts and like primitive cartoons her enigmatic *White Man Has Clean Hands* and *Hit and Run* are filled with nervous activity, comic violence, perceptual game-playing and ingenious homemade special effects. People in blindfolds smash things, fall down, disappear; the furniture collapses then scurries away as a pair of disembodied hands conduct a minimal score of ominous drum rolls or repetitive punk guitar riffs.

Her recent *We Imitate; We Break-Up* (premiered last month at the Bleeker Street's CAPS series) may be, as she says, an exposition of Piaget's theories of childhood cognition, but it looks as though George Melies and Giorgio de Chirico had taken over your high-school gym class: A set of life-sized marionette legs teach Ericka how to do the shing-a-ling and play soccer, then chase her all over the lot when she runs away with the "loot." These deadpan sexual psychodramas, in which Beckman often appears as a dancer, place her in the tradition of Loie Fuller, Maya Deren, and Yvonne Rainer. Her films are funny, idiomatic, and genuinely underground.

—J. Hoberman



HARVEY WANG