
THE BOX

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Jeremy Deller and Cecilia Bengolea

Bom Bom's Dream (2016)

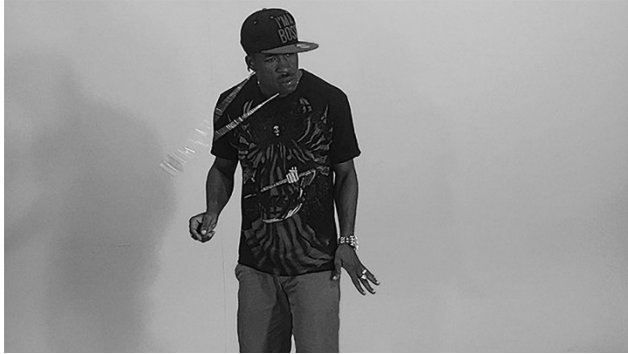


Image courtesy of the artists and The Modern Institute/Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

Bom Bom's Dream

Part documentary and part fantastical fiction, *Bom Bom's Dream* follows the adventure of its titular character, a real Japanese dancer who dreams of being crowned queen of all Jamaican dancehall performers. For most of time, Bom Bom lives in Japan working as a children's book illustrator. But for two months every year, she lives in Jamaica, drawn by the country's famous dancehall culture to perform in its epic dance competitions. Jamaican dancehall is a musical genre that originated in the late 1970s, an offspring of reggae that replaced soft, lumbering rhythms with pared-down electronic beats. Like reggae, dancehall began as an expression of resistance among the poor and disenfranchised. Also like reggae, it is one of the country's most popular cultural exports, producing famed musicians Vybz Kartel, Yellowman, Sister Nancy, and Beenie Man and influencing countless artists and musicians around the world. Just as integral to the scene is its distinctive, highly athletic, and fiercely sexual style of dance, with moves like *twerking*, *dagging*, and *dutty wine* often tied to specific songs.

British artist Jeremy Deller and Argentine dancer Cecilia Bengolea bring their anthropological interest in the culture and expressions of popular music to explore this unique scene through Bom Bom's story. The video starts with an amorous, acid-green, Jamaican-accented chameleon (voiced by Bom Bom's real life boyfriend), who narrates as a red-and-yellow haired Bom Bom swims among sharks, landing on the shores of Jamaica in search of the ultimate dance competition. A surreal, almost drug-induced series of lo-fi green sequences follow, including an intense display of dagging featuring male dancer Shelly Belly, which shows off their combined dance prowess. Our chameleon narrator returns and coaxes Bom Bom out of her dreams and back on her path toward victory.

Does Bom Bom succeed in her quest for queendom? Emerging from her dancehall fantasy, Bom Bom finds herself back in reality and ready to compete in the paved lot that serves as a dance floor. Facing off with the competition, she engages in a wild display of flexibility and athleticism, driven by the pumping beats. Twerking, gyrating, kicking, and head-topping, Bom Bom and the other female dancers seem on the verge of possession—their bodies driven as much by instinct as by any kind of choreography. Bom Bom rises from the ground caked in dirt, but still glorious. She receives her prize—an electric standing fan—with the same pride and enthusiasm she showed in competition. It's a scene that's as surreal as all the previous green screen fantasy sequences combined. But it also serves to highlight the rampant cultural appropriation of the music industry—where the likes of Drake, Rihanna, and Justin Bieber reap profits from groundbreaking beats and dance moves developed in the dusty parking lots of Jamaica.

—Jennifer Lange
Curator, Film/Video Studio Program

Cecilia Bengolea (b. 1979) was born in Buenos Aires and lives and works in Paris. A choreographer, dancer, and performance artist, she has also codirected a number of videos including *La Beauté (tôt) vouée à se défaire* (2011) with Donatien Veisman and *Cri de Pilaga* (2011) with Juliette Bineau. In 2016 Bengolea was commissioned by the Institute for Contemporary Arts for London Art Night to present a holographic video installation and perform an outdoor participatory dancehall practice with ballerina Erika Miyauchi and dancehall artist Damion BG Dancerz. Bengolea has also collaborated with artists Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Monika Gintersdorfer, and Knut Klassen, as well as Jamaican dancehall artist Joan Mendy. This is her second collaboration with Jeremy Deller; their first, *Rythmasspoetry* was commissioned by the Biennale de Lyon 2015.

Jeremy Deller (b. 1966) lives and works in London. A recipient of the 2004 Turner Prize, Deller represented Britain in the 55th Venice Biennial in 2013 and was included in the 2007 Münster Sculpture Project, Germany. His work has been shown in museums, galleries, and biennials internationally including the 2010 and 2016 São Paulo Bienals; University Museum of Contemporary Art, Mexico City; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington DC; Hayward Gallery, London; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis; MoMA PS1, New York; New Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

Bom Bom's Dream was co-commissioned by Hayward Gallery, 32nd Bienal de São Paulo, and The Vinyl Factory. It was coproduced by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary with support using public funding by Arts Council England.

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Bom Bom's Dream, 2016
12:30 mins., HD video

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