

“When you become the image of your own imagination, it's the most powerful thing you could ever do.” — RuPaul

Since choosing to pursue dance professionally, I have discovered that choreography gives me a way to turn imagination into something concrete. I try to create the things I would like to see when I go to the theatre. I have always been someone who observes, contemplates and gets lost in imagination, and I think this way of looking at the world has naturally found its place in my choreographic practice. I am drawn to the performing arts because I see them like looking through a microscope: they can enlarge a detail, shift a point of view and allow us to temporarily experience the world through someone else's perspective. Ultimately, I see choreography as a way of sculpting an image in the present.

Until now, I have mainly developed projects independently, learning through experimentation and through the solutions I found along the way. This has taught me a lot on how I work and what I am drawn to, but I now feel ready to take greater responsibility for what I create and to place my practice in dialogue with other people and perspectives. I believe CM would give me the time, dialogue, professional perspectives and framework to develop this way of working, deepen my research and take the next step in defining my voice as a choreographer. I am also highly interested in assisting another choreographer and discovering a different way of working by being by their side. Having a dedicated space for choreography would also help me distinguish my development as a dancer and performer, from my development as a choreographer. This would allow me to invest more fully in both, while one will always feed and influence the other. I also want to develop my ability to put words to my practice. There are things I understand intuitively through movement, images and making that I cannot yet always articulate, and I see learning to speak and write about my work as an essential part of becoming a choreographer.

My artistic research starts with the body. I am drawn to intense physicality, distortion and transformation, and to the possibility of making the body become an image or a character. I like precise writing, but I want that precision to leave room for the performers and for the present moment to affect the work. I strongly believe in trusting an intuition and following an idea all the way through, rather than trying to rationalise it too early or abandoning it at the first obstacle. For me, choreography is also about finding solutions within limitations: the physical possibilities of the body, the space, time or the number of performers; and allowing those constraints to become part of the creative process.

I am fascinated by the way choreography can alter our experience of time. How can a minute feel like ten seconds, or ten seconds like ten minutes. More broadly, I want to create work that is visually strong without being superficial: images that attract the eye but also carry a thought, a tension or a question.

What I particularly love about creating is the craft of it. I enjoy taking an idea and figuring out how to make it exist concretely. I enjoy thinking about all the elements that build a piece and how they can speak to one another. For me, choreography is not only about movement; it is also about constructing a microcosm.

My research is fed by different ways of looking and thinking. I am interested in philosophy and in questions about how we perceive, interpret and construct the world around us. Cinema is another important source of inspiration, particularly through framing, editing, atmosphere and its ability to shift perspective. Drawing is often where these different influences begin to take shape for me. I like moving between the visual, the conceptual and the physical, allowing one to transform into the other.

My practice in drag has also strongly influenced the way I think about transformation and characterisation. Costume interests me as an extension of choreography: it can alter the perception of a body, suggest a social position, construct a character or change the power that body seems to hold. Making my own costumes has taught me to think through materials, silhouettes and details, and to consider how an image can already tell us something before the body begins to move.

Coming from a rural environment, I know that contemporary dance can sometimes feel unfamiliar to people who have not had many opportunities to encounter it. I would like my work to create an invitation rather than a barrier; something personal and thought-provoking, while still leaving room for different people to connect with it in their own way. I want to make work that can speak both to someone who has spent their life going to contemporary dance performances and to someone who is seeing one for the first time.

This year, I would particularly like to investigate the tension between appearance and what lies underneath it. The starting point is an image from my childhood: the Toile de Jouy patterns on the walls of my grandmother's bedroom. These typically French patterns depict scenes of rural and pastoral life in pre-Revolutionary France; shepherds, sheep, lovers and landscapes all that through an idyllic and peaceful vision. I also remember small porcelain shepherdess figurines surrounded by their animals. As a child, I would look at these images and wonder what was happening beyond what they showed us.

If the shepherdess is standing peacefully among her sheep, what is the actual relationship between them? Is she their protector, their maternal figure, their guardian, or their prison warden? Is she their boss? And if she is the one making decisions, who is making decisions for her? Is she also answering to someone else? I am interested in this shifting relationship between care, control and domination: how someone can hold power over another while being subjected to a different power themselves, and how these relationships can remain hidden beneath an apparently peaceful image. I am interested in how domination can become physical without needing to be explained, and in the contrast between the sweetness of a pastoral image and the tension underneath it; something soft on the surface, but carrying a much stronger force underneath.

The CM programme would give me the opportunity to take this research further through studio time with performers. I want to test ideas physically, allow them to fail, change them and discover what emerges when they encounter real bodies. Working with performers is essential to me because the piece changes when another person enters the process and the dialogue between the choreographer and its performers. I am interested in the moment when performers become familiar with the world and rules of a piece and begin to make it their own.

Beyond this programme, after SEAD i would like to work as a freelance dancer and performer while continuing to develop my own choreographic projects; to perform my solo work as well as group pieces in different contexts, particularly festivals and independent performance platforms, structures like CCN or CDCN in France. I want to use the work I develop during my time at SEAD as a starting point for building a repertoire of pieces that I can continue developing, performing and adapting after graduation.

In the longer term, I would like to establish my own company, creating a structure through which I can develop my work and collaborate with other performers and artists. I am interested in creating pieces that can exist in different formats, from a solo to a larger group work, and that can adapt to different spaces and contexts without losing their identity. I see my time at SEAD as an important period for building the foundations of this future practice. I want to leave the school not only with experience as a dancer, but with concrete pieces, ideas and tools that I can continue to develop professionally. My ambition is to build a body of work that can travel beyond the school and find different stages, festivals and audiences.

Thank you very much for your time and for considering my application.

Looking forward to seeing you.

Best regards,

Mathieu Jayet-Roineau