

Darby Mitchell
Selected Work
2024-2025



[website goes here]
(704) 437-7979
darbym42@gmail.com
instagram: @darbymitchell.art

Artist Statement

As the mind evolves from adolescence to adulthood, more truths of the human experience begin to emerge: self-doubt and the looming threat of social anxiety can evolve into a horror of jaws and teeth. To be seen by others is a unique type of fear in that it is unavoidable. My work seeks to explore and reframe these discomforts as I've experienced them. Each drawing serves as an isolated self-exploration of that fear and, in doing so, attempts to conquer it.

Isolation, humiliation, and the fear of being perceived are present in this current body of work that depicts surreal portraiture. Some visual motifs are more abstract than others- a melting ice cream cone, to communicate the passage of time and resulting futility of its pursuit- while other moments, like eye contact and judgmental, unheard whispers, target a far more prevalent type of anxiety borne of social performance.

Framing these moments in pink creates a void of seductive, alluring space. Pink saturates, pink overwhelms, pink provides a soft cushion of flattened artificiality to each piece. When used as a backdrop, robbing the visual narrative of all exterior context aside from the figure, pink becomes an invitation. It draws in those who might not otherwise want to engage with scenes that are so challenging.

This current body of work is meditative; its self-referential nature allows me to explore my ever-changing and shaping identity, to help myself understand why and how I am so afraid. Rather than shy away from the self-indulgent nature of these meditations, I lean into them. Cloaked in pink and made sweeter, these everyday horrors are easier to swallow with a spoonful of sugar.

Artist Bio

Darby Mitchell is an artist currently living and working in South Carolina. They received their BFA from the University of North Carolina at Asheville in 2021, and has since been creating a varied body of work rooted in drawing and painting. In 2023, Mitchell was awarded a scholarship to study at the Penland School of Craft in Spruce Pine, NC. This sabbatical inspired a return to form and a subsequent acceptance to Clemson University's MFA program, where they are currently pursuing their Master's degree.

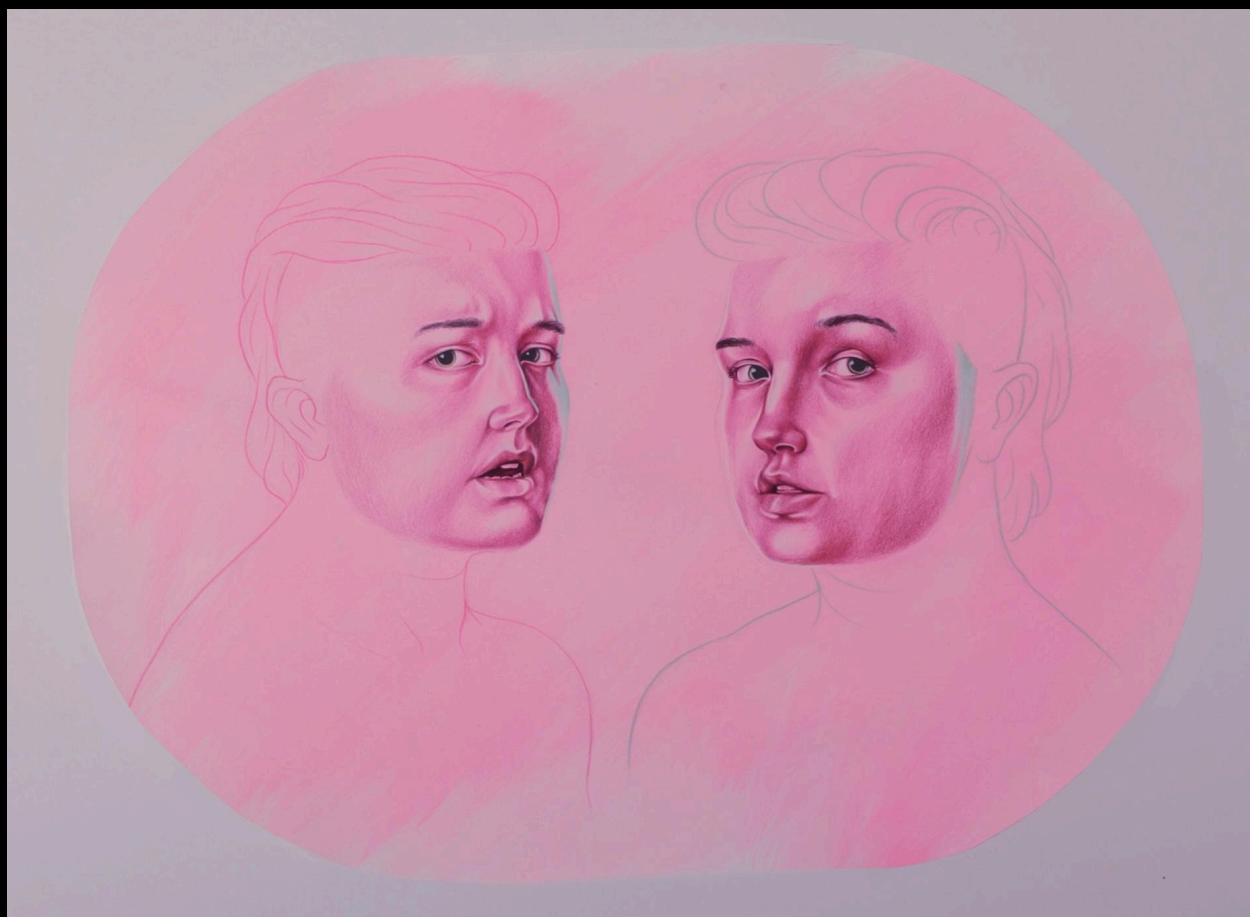
Mitchell's work is primarily two-dimensional, investigating fear and anxiety via surreal self-portraiture. Their drawings blend grotesque discomfort with colorful kitsch, contributing to the underlying dualities in their work.

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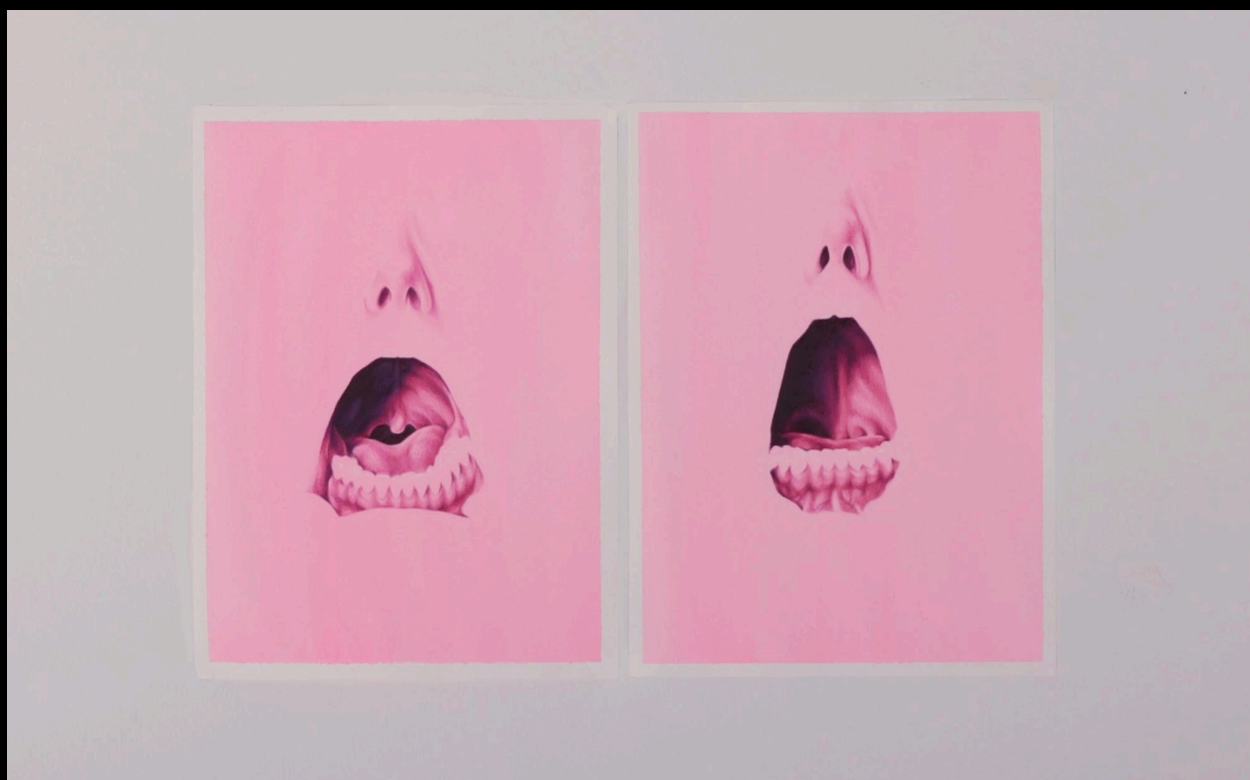
Eat Me
Colored Pencil and
Acrylic on Paper
20 x 40 in
2024

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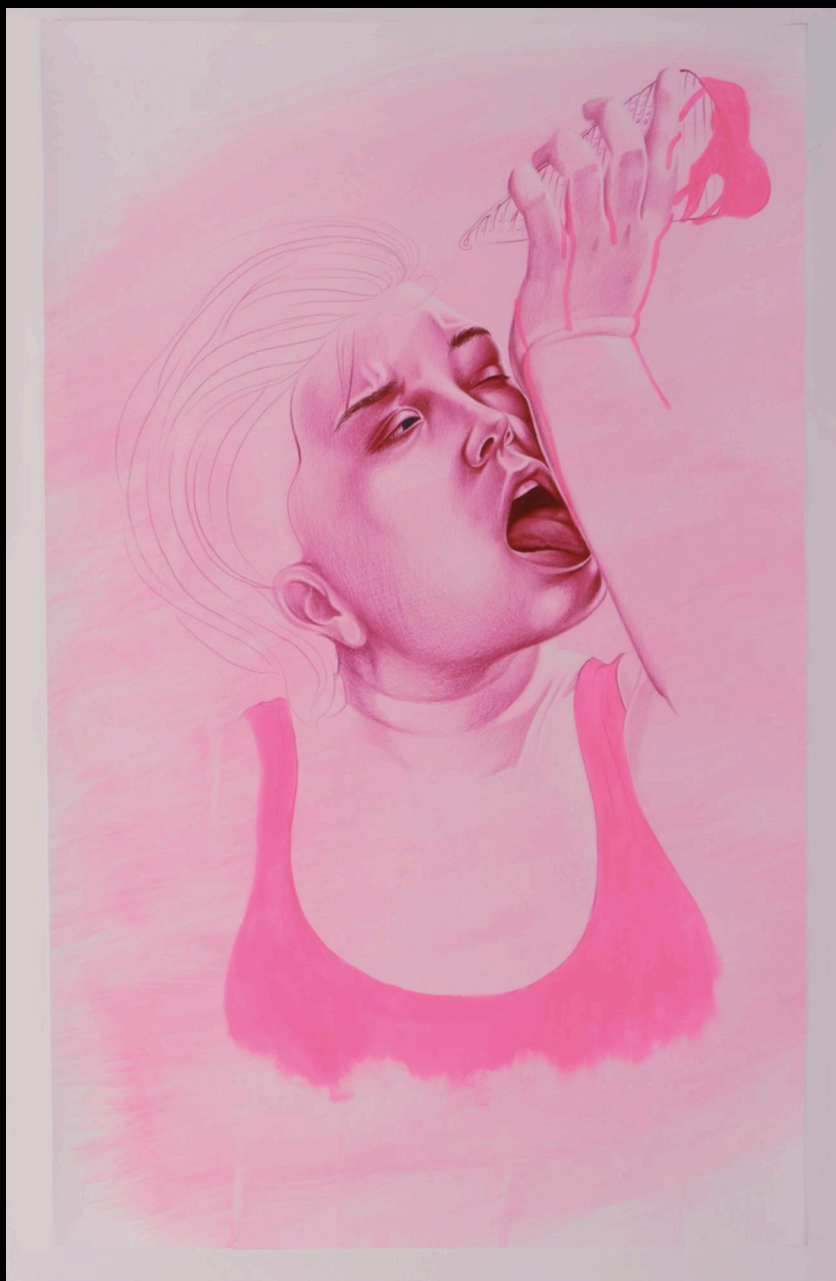
Gossip
Colored Pencil and Acrylic on Paper
24 x 36 in
2025

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Portals
Colored Pencil and Acrylic on Paper
12 x 18 in
2025

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Lick
Colored Pencil and
Acrylic on Paper
24 x 40 in
2025

Education

2021 | Bachelor of Fine Arts in Drawing
University of North Carolina at Asheville

Current | Master's of Fine Arts
Clemson University

Awards and Honors

2018 | First to Finish Study Grant, UNC Asheville
2021 | University Research Scholar Designation, UNC Asheville
2023 | Iredell Statesville Arts Education Scholarship, Penland School of Craft

Exhibition History

2025 | *Contrast: A Juried Exhibition* at Thornback Gallery, Greenville, NC
2021 | *Embodied: An Anatomical Exploration of Inner Narrative* S. Tucker Cooke Gallery, Asheville, NC