For as long as I can remember, whenever I gazed into the mirror I would be overcome with shame. My nose was too big, eyes too small, or gut too large. Surely I must be a monster, for I am far too hideous to be deserving of kindness or love. Feelings like this have haunted me for most of my life. As I grew, I soon learned that I was not alone with these perceptions. I have met so many men and women who harbored unfair anxieties about their appearances; they would judge every pimple as a summary of their being, every roll of fat as an indicator of their inadequacy, and sometimes even hurt themselves just to fit a beauty standard.

It soon became clear to me that these experiences are far more destructive than simple desires to be healthier; they are unhealthy obsessions that we have socially constructed to which we have become enslaved. We live in an age dominated by visual media, imposing near-impossible standards of beauty. Despite the universality of physical imperfections, shame continues to be inescapable. Thus we trap ourselves in a vicious cycle of yearning, delusion, and self-loathing.

My work is a critique of these impossible beauty standards. By painting the human figure without shying away from visual imperfections, I aim to promote body positivity, showing the beauty of the unaltered figure. My paintings present the figure in a pose that highlights flaws such as wrinkles or a chubby abdomen. Through my work, I strive for the viewer to find the bare humanity of the subject charming, with imperfections exposed. Working on large canvases allows me to bring my figure and portrait paintings up close and personal to the viewer. I hope that the size of the paintings draws the audience in, so that they are unable to look away from the bodily realities from which we would rather hide.

To further emphasize this, I planned each of my paintings to compliment the individual insecurities of all my models. Communicating with my models was a critical component to my process. The subjects revealed to me the things that had previously caused them mental anguish. This honest conversation allowed me to compose the figure in a way that emphasizes these discomforts, with the intention of revealing the absurdity of our own harsh judgements.