

Wende Caporale

By pushing the autobiographical nature of a self-portrait, the artist creates an immensely personal work. By Anne Hevener

Wende Caporale, best known for her portraits of children, enjoys painting an occasional self-portrait. Like artists throughout history, she appreciates the interesting set of challenges that a self-portrait presents as well as the opportunity for a bit of self-examination, but she posits that the most persuasive reason for most artists must be that the model for a self-portrait is always available.

Caporale's prize-winning painting, *Self-Portrait*

With Avignon II (opposite), actually began as a demo painting at a conference for the Portrait Society of America. "I was hemming and hawing about who I was going to use for a model," she says, "and eventually came up with the idea of doing a self-portrait." Painting while teaching can be a challenge, and Caporale added to it the job of model. "I had to pose myself and make sure I was getting back into the same position," says Caporale. "And my mouth, naturally, had to be painted last, because I was literally talking while I was painting."

Because her demo paintings are done to illustrate technical points, Caporale doesn't usually find the results especially satisfying, but this demo—just a head-and-shoulders portrait at this point—worked out quite successfully. She brought it home to her

studio and left it out for some time, telling herself that, when she had time, she would go back to it and perhaps—since there was room—finish out more of her figure.

Getting Personal

When Caporale did go back to the self-portrait, there were events going on in her personal life that greatly influenced the direction it took. Her daughter, Avignon, had just announced to her and her husband, artist Daniel Greene, that she was interested in going away for high school, and Caporale was having difficulty coming to terms. "The thought of my child going away to school was pretty emotional for me, and ultimately, it prompted me to include her in this painting." Avignon, who appears as the pencil sketch on the left, was the first piece of the background—and the inspiration for what eventually became an intricate montage of some of the most important and meaningful images to the artist.

Caporale worked in a Daniel Greene piece, of course, choosing his famous portrait of Robert Beverly Hale (above shoulder, on right), who was a curator of American Painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a drawing and anatomy instructor at The Art Students League in New York for more than 50 years. "That painting has a particular significance for me; I saw it even before I met Dan," Caporale says. "And I ended up marrying him as a result of that portrait." The story, as she relays it, began back in art school. When Caporale first expressed interest in pastels, two of her teachers suggested she watch Greene demonstrate. She found a book about



Learn more about the artist at her Web site: wendecaporale.com