



English Model (20x16)



Elsie (36x24)

Greene in the library, poured over it, and fell in love with his work. "Then, I had this bright idea that I would go into the city during my Christmas break to try to study with him." But when she went to the Arts Student League to sign up for a class, she was told that Greene had just moved out to the country and was no longer teaching—except for occasional classes. "I was devastated," Caporale says, "and as I turned around, there in the lobby was the first actual painting of Dan's that I ever saw in person; it was the portrait of Robert Beverly Hale, and it blew me away." She told her roommate, who was with her and anxious to be going, to let her "have a moment" with the painting. "I remember telling her: 'This is saying everything I want to be able to say. This is the way I want to paint.' And then I said: 'Mark my words; this painting is going to change my life.'"

Surrounded by Inspiration

Caporale's next additions were images by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), James Jebusa

Shannon (1862-1923) and Mary Cassatt (1844-1926)—artists who have been influential and inspiring to her. And last, Caporale decided to include her father (in the top left) who had recently passed away. "My father was a favorite model of Dan's, so I thought he would be a wonderful addition."

It was only then, after this had evolved and the placements had been determined, that Caporale realized that Avignon is the only figure who's looking off. "Everyone else is looking inward, focusing on me at the center of attention—and that seemed significant. Avignon was going off and doing her own thing. It was not intentional, compositionally; it just worked out that way." So, in the end, the painting was saying exactly what was on the artist's mind—and in her heart. "I'm missing her," Caporale says. "And I'm very sad that she's leaving, but also very proud of the fact that she's doing what she wants to do and that she's happy."

Another engaging aspect of Caporale's self-portrait is the inclusion of her hands. "I really wanted to include my hands because I'm Italian and I end up talking with them," Caporale says, laughing. "And hands can be very expressive." But when she started, she quickly ran into a snag: "If I wanted to include both my hands, I wondered, how was I going to do that if I needed one of my hands to draw with?" At that moment, Caporale realized that artists throughout history would have had to figure out a way to meet this same challenge. "What I did was put my right hand into position and study it, then draw with it, and then put it back into position. I had to keep that hand still, and tried to find a position that I could easily return to. It was a challenge, but fun, not frustrating. It was an 'ah-ha' moment that gave me renewed appreciation for the brilliant predecessors whose work fills museums."

Making Choices

Part of the pleasure of the self-portrait is working from life. "I refused to use a photograph for any part of my figure," Caporale says. "It was done completely from life. So there's no photograph of me in that position at all; that was the challenge I had set up for myself." And as much as she would prefer to paint all portraiture from life, Caporale had to weigh the options. "At some point in my career, it became clear that were I to choose to work from life for my commissioned work, all my clients would have to be local or I would have to travel out of town and spend lengths of time away from my family. I concluded that I didn't want to do that."

Caporale's process is to meet the client in person, set up the pose and take photographs that she can use later as reference in her studio. "It's easier," she says, "since everything is static, but you still have to make decisions—but not as many decisions as when there's a live model in front of you, and that's so much more exciting."

When a portrait is near completion, Caporale always goes back to the client for a final sitting. "I'm able to tweak things then," she says. "I'll start to