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Suzanne Caporael was born in New York in August, 1949. The artist's father, a Civil Engineer, moved the family around the United States until settling in California in the mid-sixties. As a child, she trained as a Flamenco dancer, but was reluctant to take the stage. Caporael has been painting "since memory," and her childhood paintings often featured apparitions of the Virgin Mary.

She earned her Bachelors and Masters Degrees from Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles. Caporael did not begin showing her work until she was thirty-five years old, when then Director Paul Schimmel debuted her work at the Newport Harbor Art Museum (now the Orange County Museum of Art).

In 1986, Caporael was awarded the National Endowment Grant in Painting, which she spent on a new washer and dryer. She has been a visiting professor the University of California, Santa Barbara and the San Francisco Art Institute. In 2009, she was an artist-in-residence at the Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation in Connecticut. Her work is in numerous public and private collections including the Art Institute of Chicago; The Chasen Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin; The Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art; The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York; and Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

Until moving to New York in 1999, Caporael lived in rural California. She currently lives and works on a farm in Stone Ridge, New York with her husband, the novelist Bruce Murkoff.