



# JANE SZABO

**What inspires you artistically? (Other artists, poetry literature, places, feelings etc.)**

Artistically, I am inspired by a wide range of media. As an artist using photography, of course I look at a lot of photographic work, and though inspired and influenced by this medium, I constantly explore ways to push the medium and create imagery that is unique. Artists that make installations and sculptural work also influence my art making as I also incorporate three dimensional elements into my work. Not all of my inspiration comes from visual mediums. The literary memoir is a powerful influence – I am drawn to authors that tell their story with a raw, honest and introspective voice. The willingness to be open and to share their failures and fears is a strategy I employ in my narrative photographic projects. I consider all the work I make to be self-portraiture, and sharing my story is at the heart of my artistic process.

**Have you always worked in this medium, if not briefly explain your artistic journey?**

I initially trained as a painter, and then segued into working as a mixed media installation artist. I took a long gap from the art world to work in the film industry, which included working as a scenic painter and model maker / prop builder. When I returned to the art world with a focus as a photographer, I brought the skill sets as a prop maker and installation artist into my photographic projects. Transitioning to photography allowed me to combine all of my skill sets into making a photographic image.

**Please briefly explain your process?** I work in projects, or series. Each series explores a very specific idea, and to illustrate that idea, I choose a style or process that works best to convey the concept. The image “*Gridding the Space #6*”, from the series [Sense of Self](#) uses long exposure photography to create a sense of blur in these self-portraits which have a performative aspect to them. The work addresses my desire to control myself, my environment, the world around me, and my constant failure to do so; I ultimately walk away.

**How does your relationship with your body shape your practice?**



Though my body does not appear in all of my work, I consider everything I make to be self-portraiture. In my series “[Somewhere Else](#)” the work features a collection of houses covered in maps and staged in landscapes, and the house becomes a stand in for self. As curated Ted Meyer noticed, the works that do include my body rarely show my face, and when they do, it is obscured. I had not made the conscious connection of this decision to the fact that I have prosopagnosia, or face blindness – but it is clear that, as I do

not use the face itself to gather information about a person, this was not important information I feel needed to be conveyed.

### **What do you want medical professionals to come away with after viewing your artwork? The general public?**

**I did not really understand or admit that I had prosopagnosia, or face blindness until much later in life. My husband figured it out for me when he realized I could never tell people apart when we watched movies. All those years that I thought I was just socially awkward at parties because I didn't recognize people was actually based on a clinical condition. I never really accepted this as true until Ted Meyer paired me with a neuroscientist in connection to the Art & Med project, and he confirmed that I do indeed have this deficit. I have since come to accept this, and to understand how I use so many other factors to identify people – hair style, the tone one's voice, body language, the sound of a person's footsteps, etc. If someone I know well cuts their hair, or grows or shaves their beard, it is very likely I will not recognize them as I have trained my brain to identify them based on these specific characteristics. Having my condition confirmed has given me the wisdom to be more forthcoming with people and to warn them when we meet that it is likely I will not recognize them the next time. Both the general public and the medical world may gain understanding of this condition, and how people with prosopagnosia create alternative methods to identify people, so the condition may not be readily apparent.**

### **What do you think the role of the artist/patient is in our modern world?**

The role of the artist is to encourage contemplation and discussion about issues and events in the world, and these issues might be medical, environmental, political etc. I believe artists can spur conversation and thought about these topics in subtle ways, and lead the viewer to want to understand the topic more deeply.



Images:

1. Gridding the Space (R detail)
2. Gridding the Space (L detail)
3. March2, Coal Creek
4. Portrait of Jane Szabo

Images Courtesy of the Artist

<https://www.janeszabophotography.com/>  
<https://www.torranceartmuseum.com/interviews>