**Pam Ferris-Olson** (00:00): Today on the Women Mind The Water podcast I'm speaking with Janavi Kramer. Janavi is a mixed media artist who uses watercolors and digital illustrations to reflect her passion for the ocean and her creatures. Janavi hopes her work will prompt concern for their survival.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (00:19): The Women Mind The Water podcast engages artists in conversation about their work and explores their connection with the ocean. Through their stories, Women Mind The Water hopes to inspire and encourage action to protect the ocean and her creatures. It is with pleasure that I welcome Janavi Kramer to the Woman Mind The Water artivist podcast series.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (00:40): Janavi is a mixed media artist who lives in Hertfordshire, England. Janavi's passion for the ocean develop as she earned to dive. Since those days, nearly a decade ago, Janavi has dived in waters around the globe, including Indonesia, the Philippines, Spain, and Iceland. Janavi's mission is to create work and encourages an appreciation of the natural world and support the world being done by charities to make a difference.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (01:13): Welcome, Janavi. I am so glad you could join me on the Women Mind The Water podcast. I'm really looking forward to hearing about your journey as an artist, and particularly as an artivist on a mission to support the ocean and her creatures. Janavi, I looked up Herfordshire on Google and see that it is not along the coast of England. How is it that you decided to learn to dive?

**Janavi Kramer** (01:37): No, it certainly isn't. First of all, thank you so much for having me on today. It's n absolute pleasure, like you said, to connect with like-minded ocean women. So I'm really excited about our chat today.

**Janavi Kramer** (01:48): But yes, you are completely right. It is very much landlocked, if you will. I'm just north of London here in the UK. So my love of the ocean really started from quite a young age. My parents are from mixed heritage. So my dad is actually from the north of the UK in Yorkshire. So for much of my childhood, we spent a lot of time on the rugged British coastline, which is really so diverse. The ecosystems can vary within a couple of hundred miles, quite drastically.

**Janavi Kramer** (02:21): So I spent a lot of time as a young girl foraging through rock pools and wading into the water. And I think that's where my fascination really started. And from there it only really grew. I grew up watching Blue Planet and of course Jacque Cousteau. And so it was just that sort of fascination and passion was instilled in me in quite a young age. And I think that's really kind of been amplified in my adult life now.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (02:48): So how did you take up diving?

**Janavi Kramer** (02:50): So diving was something I discovered much later in life. I say still quite young. I was a teenager, but I wish I'd started earlier, now, looking back. I started when I was at university, again in central London. I found out that there was a scuba dive club just down the road for me. And I just sort of - this light bulb moment happened in my head that it just had never occurred to me. I didn't know anyone that was a diver. I'd never been diving or seen what it was like other than in TV and films. And it just hadn't occurred to me that it was something that I could try. So of course, as soon I could, I called them up and I booked a session and sort of not really looked back since.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (03:30): Okay, well we'll get back to you diving soon, but first I wanted to talk to you about your art. Have you always been an artist?

**Janavi Kramer** (03:38): I would like to say yes, although technically that's not my professional background. But I grew up really lucky because my mom is an artist. So even again, going back to my childhood, a lot of these things have been ingrained in me from a very early age. When we weren't at school, it was sat in my mom's studio with a paintbrush and palette and just drawing things that I could find in the garden. So I have only become a professional artist, I'd say, about three or four years ago. And working really, as you can see through my work is very environment and ocean focused. And so, yeah, no, I haven't always been, but creativity is always been a flare in myself and in my family and the people I surround myself with. And I think it's a really important part of my identity. So whether it was painting something or textiles or photography, art has always been a big passion of mine.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (04:35): So what were you creating before you discovered a passion for the ocean?

**Janavi Kramer** (04:39): So my background is actually in theater and so I'm a trained physical theater performer. And it's a very abstract form of theater and it's more based on body language and the visuals behind it. So that's where the idea that I really latched onto this concept of a universal language, which is of course what you find in art.

**Janavi Kramer** (05:04): It doesn't matter what background you're from, what language you speak, everyone can find a way to connect to it. And so for me, although I studied it and I was part of a theater company for a couple of years, I actually, my last final piece I did with my company was about the ocean. I happened to be connected with other performers that were also very passionate about it. And we did a whole piece that we taught around Canada and Germany and other parts of Europe that was about the impact of man on the ocean. And so I think from that point on, I start to really play with these ideas of how could I use some of my other skills to contribute towards the conservation of the ocean.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (05:46): So as an artist, what challenges do you face in representing the three dimensional underwater world in a two dimensional art form? And maybe you could talk about a specific image that you've created and for those who are listening to an audio only version of the podcast, can you describe the image?

**Janavi Kramer** (06:05): Absolutely. So for me, it may seem as a challenge from the outside, but for myself when I'm creating, I always try to think of it as an opportunity because what I'm really trying to do with my work is captivate the audience of people who maybe aren't so connected to the ocean. So it is quite difficult when you think, the ocean is such a vast place and it's filled with vibrant colors and textures and patterns. So I'm not thinking so much about the dimensional aspect. Although I hope that what I create does have some kind of reminiscence of real life qualities.

**Janavi Kramer** (06:41): I try to always paint things - I work primarily in watercolor as well. So it's really vibrant pigments and it's very fluid to work with, again, which is very reminiscent of the ocean. But I always use my experiences as a diver, so everything is always very vibrant colors.

**Janavi Kramer** (07:01): For instance, one of my recent pieces that I'm working on at the moment, which I haven't previewed on any of my social media yet is a very large scale hammerhead shark painting, because they're very famous for schooling and very deep ocean blues. And so for me, it's, I'm not so much worried about it being three-dimensional, but more so really captivating the imagination of people who look at it. So that does involve using vibrant colors. I'm also a bit of a self confessed perfectionist. So I'm very focused on very small details. If anyone seen any of the videos I post anywhere, I'm often working with paint brushes that are millimeters small. They're very, very small. And I take great pride in doing that.

**Janavi Kramer** (07:45): And I think often it's, there's that fun in discovering new ways of looking at a species. So some of them are very vibrant blues and stuff, and it may not necessarily be how you would - like say for instance a blue whale or a humpback whale, their skin is actually more of a gray texture and gray color palette. But I always try to make them look as vibrant as possible to sort of really entice people to want to learn more about them and just be fascinated with them as I am.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (08:15): Right. So it seems that many of your underwater animals you created are blue in color rather than when you talk about vibrant colors, and of course blue can be vibrant. And so I'm interested to know whether that is the way the creatures appear when you view them when you're diving, or do you use blue as a way to conceptually evoke the feeling that the creatures slip in water.

**Janavi Kramer** (08:38): To be honest, Pam, it's a little bit of both, because interestingly enough, for any of your audience that may be listening, when you are diving, as you decrease in depth, you actually lose some of the warmer color palettes. So primarily red is the first one to go. So as you get deeper, a lot of these creatures, they may not actually appear the same as when you were, if you were to bring them to the surface, which obviously you wouldn't want to, but if you were to, the colors are very different.

**Janavi Kramer** (09:04): So a lot of underwater photographers will use different filters and lights to combat this. But when I'm painting, I'm trying to evoke this sense of being underwater with this species. And blue is a very, it's a very emotive color. And I think for a lot of people, it, you know it straightaway connects to some body of water, like an image in your mind. So I do love to use the color blue. And I think it's such a powerful color. And it does really connect directly back to the ocean, which is what I'm trying to do with my work.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (09:34): Okay. I understand that. And for me, blue is the most powerful color. So I agree. So I can't wait any longer. I want to know about your diving in Iceland. I've been there and I've also been to Greenland and I've kayaked there but I never considered actually getting in the water. What is it like underwater and what sort of creatures live in Iceland?

**Janavi Kramer** (09:56): Wow, amazing. You've got one up on me. Greenland is still on my list to get to. But Iceland is a really wonderful place. It's actually the most different marine environment that I have dived in, in comparison to anywhere else I have, because sadly I didn't get to dive in the ocean. But what I did dive in is Silfra, which is the joining, it's a sort of a gap between the two tectonic plates. So there's actually no marine life there. There's nothing.

**Janavi Kramer** (10:22): And when I went, which was in December, the water was about minus one to minus two degrees. So it's very, very cold and it's not for the faint hearted. But the draw there is obviously the tectonic plates, which is quite a novelty. But it's something that I'll always remember very fondly is just that the clarity of the water is like nothing else you've ever seen.

**Janavi Kramer** (10:44): You know, often when you speak to divers or snorkelers, they'll talk about visibility. And here in the UK, visibility is very touch and go. Sometimes you can't see your hand in front of your face, but sometimes you can see maybe five to 10 meters, if you're lucky. But in Silfra, in Iceland, you can see almost right to the other end of the body of water, which is just absolutely incredible. It's certainly an experience I'd recommend a lot of people have because it's very - in that moment, you feel very present and you're very aware of yourself in the water. And it's a really lovely way to connect with that.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (11:18): I would say that when it's that cold, you are aware of your body. I know I was kayaking in Greenland in October and the surface of the water was just turning to ice. So it was ice crystals. And there were places where I had to take my paddle and dig in order to basically pull myself along. So again, I can't think about getting in the water. So.

**Janavi Kramer** (11:39): It's the coldest, I think I've ever been in my life, but it was totally worth it.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (11:45): So what's caused you to think that the ocean needs your support?

**Janavi Kramer** (11:50): I think really that's - my eyes have opened to the threats that are impacting the ocean through my diving experience. Because there's no better way to really understand the impacts other than seeing it firsthand, and for those people who aren't maybe connected to the water so much.

**Janavi Kramer** (12:09): For a lot of people, it's just news stories, climate change and you even have people that are in doubt or in denial about the impacts. But when you are in the water faced with things such as the impacts of ocean acidification or plastic pollution, there's no way you can deny it. And it's a very big problem. And it's over the near decade that I've been diving, I have seen a drastic increase in that.

**Janavi Kramer** (12:33): So it's kind of become an impending, almost feels like an impending doom that we just, you need to act upon it otherwise there are a lot of things that will be gone before we have the chance to blink. Which is a very sad fate, but it's a very inspiring thing as well because there's such a sense of emergency and immediacy. So that's why my art is very much focused on raising awareness of different species and the plight against, and the threats that impact, not just them, but the environments that they live in too.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (13:06): Okay. So I saw on your Below and Beyond Art site that you collaborate with organizations like Manta Trust and Shark Guardian. How do you decide who to collaborate with and what is the nature of your collaboration?

**Janavi Kramer** (13:21): So for me, it was my first collaboration that I made was with Shark Guardian. And it came from a place of - I was at a point where I was creating a lot of art and illustrations portraying different animals and species. And like I said, the threats that are impacting them, but it's that concept of how do you take that a step further? So that is by supporting different charities and whether that's through spreading awareness of their work, so illustrations or creating work for them to share, because sometimes it's tough for them to reach a broader audience when they're a smaller charity. But also I donate a percentage of my sales to the different charities that I partner with. And I've been really lucky to make some really wonderful connections so far. I think for me, the way I choose the charities comes from a place of where I think there needs the most support.

**Janavi Kramer** (14:12): So for instance, there's a really big - when I started, sorry, going back a little bit. When I started with Shark Guardian is when they were running a campaign against shark finning. Which was a very current issue and it was impacting us not only here in the UK, but globally. And they were trying to get petitions signed to get it discussed in government. So that's why I thought, this is a charity I want to go to and see if I can pursue and help them further. Since then, it's been a case of, I try to actually work with bigger ones, such as Shark Guardian, and Manta Trust. I try to focus my energy on maybe smaller charities and organizations that maybe don't have that kind of almost, I'm hesitant to use the word fame, but you know, that bigger status.

**Janavi Kramer** (14:57): So there are ones such as Thresher Shark ID, which are based in Indonesia, and it's a really localized, small charity that are working with a problem head on right there on their sea front. So I'm quite trying to support them as well at the moment. And I think the nature of my collaboration, it varies a lot from different charities. Sometimes it is creating artwork. Sometimes it's donating money where I can through sales of my work, but also helping them with graphics and images to post on their social media, to help broaden their awareness of different topics.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (15:30): Lovely. So I'd like to end by asking if you would offer three things that concern you about the state of the ocean and speak to what people can do to make a positive difference.

**Janavi Kramer** (15:42): I think there are, it's hard to pick three. I think the best way to put it is, this is the time to act. There's so much impact in the ocean that that's what's almost making this issue and the threat unbearable is that all the threats are coming from every angle. So whether it is rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, plastic pollution, environmental destruction. And so my advice to your listeners and people that follow me is to - you don't have to be an artist. You don't have to be a scuba diver. Think of the skills that you have yourself and ways that you can manifest them and use them in a way to support that. So you can, say for instance, if you are a runner, you can run a long distance and raise money for a charity that is doing work on the front line and support them. Or you can help reach out to charities.

**Janavi Kramer** (16:30): I think what people maybe sometimes don't see is that a lot of these charities, I've been really lucky and feel very honored and privileged to have these connections, but it's something that anyone can do. They're all there waiting with open arms. You just have to send them an email and say, I'd really like to help. And most of them will welcome you with open arms and give you loads of resources in the different ways you can help. So there's also, here in the UK, you can do beach cleans with many different charities. The list goes on really, and I'm happy to help and support anyone that would like further advice if they want to reach out to me on any of my social medias, because I'm really enthusiastic and excited to see more people engaging. It's the purpose behind what I do is encouraging people to want to be come more involved and learn more about the ocean too.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (17:17): All right, well stick around because I have a few questions for you, and I really appreciate that you made the time and were patient enough, because we had certain technical difficulties. But I appreciate that you made the time to be on Women Mind The Water and is always a pleasure to meet another water woman. And you truly are a woman of the water. Thank you for being here.

**Janavi Kramer** (17:42): Thank you so much, Pam. It's been an absolute pleasure being on here and lovely to connect with you as well.

**Pam Ferris-Olson** (17:48): Yes. So I'd like to remind listeners that I have been speaking with Janavi Kramer for the Women Mind The Water podcast series. The Series can be viewed on womenmindthewater.com. An audio only version of this podcast is available on the Women Mind The Water website, on iTunes and also on Spotify, Stitcher and Google podcast. Women Mind The Water is grateful to Jane Rice for the song Women of Water. All rights for the Women Mind The Water name and logo belong to Pam Ferris-Olson. This is Pam Ferris-Olsen.