

Women at Warp 144: Deep Space Bob Ross (Art & Artists in Trek)

GRACE:

Hi and welcome to Women at Warp: A Roddenberry Star Trek podcast. join us as our crew of four women Star Trek fans boldly go on our biweekly mission to explore our favorite franchise. My name is Grace and thanks for tuning in. with us today we've got Jarrah.

JARRAH:

Paint it so!

GRACE:

impressed repeating Paint it so. Paint it so. And with us for our special guest we have Amanda

AMANDA:

Hello.

GRACE:

Yeah! And before we get to our main topic we have a little bit of housekeeping to do first. Our show is made possible by our patrons on Patreon. If you'd like to become a patron, you can do so for as little as a dollar a month and get awesome rewards. From thanks on social media up to handcrafted hand painted watchalong commentaries. Visit www.patreon/womenatwarp. You can also support us by leaving a rating or review on Apple podcasts or wherever you get your podcasts. I would say we don't have any upcoming con appearances immediately right now.

JARRAH:

No. Just if you know, if virtual things come across our desk. And let us know if you have a virtual thing coming up. Because we're a little bit bored.

GRACE:

And you know what? Don't even let us know if it's Star Trek related. Just check in with us so we know you're okay. So with us this week with our special guest Amanda Wong. Amanda, would you like to introduce yourself and tell us a little about yourself?

AMANDA:

Thanks Grace. Well, I work as an artist in animation. I currently live in Vancouver and I've worked on- some of my projects I've worked on are the My Little Pony movie, Rick and Morty season four, the first version of DC Super Hero Girls, and most recently Netflix's Carmen Sandiego. *crew Oohs*

GRACE:

We were in rarified cartoon company and I love it.

AMANDA:

Also I am a huge fan of Star Trek. I've been watching it since I was seven.

GRACE:

Aw! Do you want to tell us a little bit about your personal experience with Star Trek?

AMADA:

Well I first stumbled upon it, as I told you when I was 7, by just watching the Next Generation reruns and then since then I caught on DS9, Voyager, and some of Enterprise in real time and I would say that I personally consider DS9 the strongest series. But my favorite would probably have to be TNG.

GRACE:

Excellent. You have refined tastes, as we can see. So our main topic today, if you hadn't sussed it out already, is art and artists in Trek. The art that we see and how the artistic *pretentious voice* temperament and lifestyle is examined for all its art-yness in Trek. So let's talk about art and Star Trek. One of the first things I think we need to touch on is how do we see art and artists as characters in media at large? And how that's represented in Star Trek.

JARRAH:

Literally the first thought, the one I just have is like the media stereotype of an artist as I think about like I sort of like bohemian hippie types, who is also insane, and probably a guy.

GRACE:

But women love him because he's a *creative* type.

JARRAH:

laughs Yeah like I'm thinking like Van Gogh in Doctor Who.

GRACE:

Yeah.

AMANDA:

Oh right.

JARRAH:

And like maybe a bit of a mess, but also like that they have this innate genius.

GRACE:

Yeah. My fave- like I said I really love always looking into the different sort of media creation of *pretentious voice* "They have the artistic temperament. they're not like you and me!" And I love that that comes through even into the distant future, kind of. In our perception of the arts and the

artistes. We always see them as being this kind of different breed of person and personality and that that always strikes me as funny, because they are people too. They're just creative people.

JARRAH:

Yeah. And I think that one thing that we don't see a lot in the media of any kind, and Star Trek included, is like the work. And the discipline. It's just kind of seen to be this like thing that just kind of springs forth.

GRACE:

You pull a fully painted painting out of your head?

JARRAH:

Yeah. And like no one has to learn anything to do it.

AMANDA:

Yeah and you very rarely see collaborative art. Especially because I come from a medium that is very team based. And I would say mainstream perception of art usually stems from an idea coming from one great person. Like most people will credit all the genius of Rick and Morty to maybe one man like Dan Harmon, or My Little Pony to Lauren Faust. But it is very collaborative and you very rarely see that kind of art portrayed in media. Possibly because the logistics of it makes it difficult. Especially if you want to give shorthand within one episode. So then you say *grand voice* "This great work was created by *this* Bajoran poet." You don't really see the process behind it. Or "This play was created by this great man." And you don't see the- all the editing and collaboration behind it.

GRACE:

Kind of like all of Star Trek and-

JARRAH:

Like Roddenberry?

GRACE:

Yeah! "It wasn't a collaboration, it was just one artistic endeavor that came out of a single person." *Amanda laughs* Which I think makes the whole topic of art in Star Trek *extra* ironic, just in that idea of everything being credited to one person rather than as a collaborative effort

JARRAH:

Yeah and Star Trek really, I think, unwittingly reproduces sexism that we have in this idea of like what a stereotypical "great artist" is. They reference a lot of real life artists throughout the series but it's pretty much all European guys or else aliens. So it'll be like "Yeah this Bajoran poet" or "This Vulcan playwright" or "This Cardassian architect" but then it's like "Salvador Dali" "Monet" "Michelangelo" "Samuel Beckett."

GRACE:

There's this wonderful tweet that was going around for a while and, I was trying to find it so I could reference it for this episode, and it was along the lines of "Talking about famous artists and great thinkers and Star Trek is always like 'it'll be up there with the likes of Plato, Aristophanes, and Gleepglorp the bug man!'" *crew laughs*

AMANDA:

Yeah I definitely remember in the DS9 episode Muse, the woman specifically says like "Alien name. Alien name. Keats."

JARRAH:

laughing Yes! Yeah! I just watched that one.

AMANDA:

Or in Star Trek Discovery where they're like you know "Don't lose this opportunity to not be like Zefram Cochran, alien name, Elon Musk."

GRACE:

disdainfully I know! *all laugh* We're always gonna have to live with that being one of the examples in a contemporary Star Trek.

AMANDA:

You can always frame it that "Well the speech was given by *a bad* person." *all laugh*

GRACE:

Maybe it's gonna be one of those horrible "The *legacy* is more important than the *man*" things. Which we also see with a lot of artists!

JARRAH:

Totally. But I think it's worth noting, you know, a couple of reasons why that sexism kind of exists in art history and art criticism and one of those is the fact that like women artists throughout history have faced real barriers. Like you know they go back to like Virginia Woolf talking about "a room of ones own" and that applies throughout other types of art. And you know, having to juggle different responsibilities, being denied the ability to earn your own income, as well is just like sexism and perception. But there's also been like really a concerted attempt, that is only more recently begun to be dismantled, to like devalue women's- like more traditionally women's forms of arts like textiles and folk art as like "crafts." So there's all these like arbitrary distinctions based on like what women have in history created versus what men have created. And those are just interesting things that I think like the creators of Star Trek were probably not aware of. But by really only- like there were a lot of women and non-white artists that existed that they could have name dropped and they basically never did.

GRACE:

I'm glad you brought that up because one of the things I was doing as research for this episode is I was trying to look up pictures of different prop pieces of artwork throughout the different series to reference. And I realized there was this huge disparity between like prop paintings created to have been done by male characters versus by non-male characters. Like we've got a huge chunk of like prop paintings that we've seen and that float around on Christie's every now and then by Data, and *sighs* I could only really find for paint-paintings done by a woman character the ones done in an *asylum* of Kahn and Napoleon and just portraits of "great men" and that contrast really was weird. Especially when I kept looking for stuff about women artists in Star Trek, like characters, and I didn't see paintings so much as tchotkes and like little bits of folk art.

AMANDA:

Yeah. Come to think of it the only female artist that I can think of who did paintings was actually Ziyal.

JARRAH:

Yeah and I think like, that is shown in a pretty decent and neutral way. Like you know, Marla MacGyvers painting all these like men megalomaniacs is much more problematic and it's kind of indicative of the weakness of her character, and is just very weird when given that she's like the *only* one. Whereas I think Ziyal is more like you know, she's a person, she's going to school so she's learning things, she's doing work, she's growing.

GRACE:

I feel like we missed out not getting to see Ziyal have the full art school experience through the lens of Star Trek.

JARRAH:

Cardassian Art School Confidential?

GRACE:

Exactly. Yes. Think of what we could've got.

AMANDA:

I always thought they missed a nice bonding scene, if they had a nice little scene between Ziyal and Major Kira where Major Kira tried to bond with Ziyal by trying to learn painting or something. Especially because Kira was supposed to come from an artist family if the Bajorans had kept their caste system. Her mother was an icon painter and then she *terribly* tried to follow in her mother's footsteps as an obsession to terrible- to bleak results. And what I especially liked about Ziyal's character is that she's given a moment in the episode Sons and Daughters to explain why she decided to become an artist and she was drawing from her experience as both a Bajoran and Cardassian. And she says to Dukat and Kira that she wanted her art to try to bring

people together. It was also like a nice character moment to show how incredibly naive she was. But I thought that was really sweet of her.

GRACE:

She's very much a sort of idealized version of what we want to believe art is there for. *wishy washy voice* "Like it's for bringing us all together and for being nice."

AMANDA;

Yeah *same voice* "It's for connection."

GRACE:

"Art shouldn't be divisive."

AMANDA:

Yes It should show, you know, what would things be in an ideal world.

GRACE:

Yes. "What would art be in an ideal world?" which is really hard to comprehend considering how much art is done *freelance* these days and how that would work in a post scarcity society.

JARRAH:

Yeah well that was one thing like me and Grace were talking about a little bit before we started, was this idea of like how you whether or not you call yourself an artist in our world really has to do with whether you can make a living off of it. That a lot of people who have artistic hobbies wouldn't call themselves artists. So does that change if you're in a post capitalist society where you, if you wanted to, you could pursue art your entire life and no one has to like it.

GRACE:

How far into it do you have to be for it to be less a hobby and more a descriptor of you? Which is really funny considering just, this was also a bizarre pattern I noticed in the series, There's a lot of portraits painted of people. Just that portraiture is still a huge thing because wherever there will be artists apparently there will be people who want their ego to be fed by artists and by having big old school portraits done of them.

AMANDA:

It's true. Dukat did complain that there was no statue of him on Bajor. *Jarrah laughs*

GRACE:

baby voice Waaaaah!

JARRAH:

I also like, you know, that they have like figure painting night *laughs* with like Data and Picard. That whole episode is terrible, but that one scene is pretty fun.

GRACE:

I was going to say I like how that episode kind of establishes a) name dropping word salad in reference to art culture. Just having- Data comparing people's artwork, when we do have it happen on Star Trek, really just kind of sounds like him barfing up an art Illustrated Dictionary. Also that the male gaze is still very present in art.

AMANDA:

Yeah I was just about to bring that up. Especially- even in the Doctors fantasies. He's still doing figure drawing, Which is good, but of Seven of Nine.

GRACE:

And she is getting drawn like one of his French girls. *Amanda laughs* And it is ridiculous. Especially when you look at her going through and being like "And he's done this more than once!" They're all just different blown up versions of the exact same drawing, and I appreciate that. I have such a love for weird art props in TV. Like I said I was looking for examples of the props, mostly because I love when you have anything in a TV show where they're talking about "a great work of art" and then you see the work of art and it was really for- all the effort put into it very clearly painted by someone who's a house painter or is there to *laughs* paint the set and I love it. I love when people are hyping up a painting that looks like someone's cousin just did it. And *another* reason we need to give Night Gallery as a show more credit is the paintings and it were very beautiful and very well done. But Prop paintings, I love 'em so much.

JARRAH:

I will happily produce you a prop replica of Kira's sculptures in Accession.

GRACE:

That would mean the world to me. Honestly I want *Jarrah laughs* I want to curate a gallery entirely of prop artwork reproductions.

JARRAH:

All right, new quarantine task.

GRACE:

New quarantine task and new life goal.

JARRAH:

How did you feel about Accession Amanda, and this idea of like artist castes? And I guess like the message that that is a terrible idea?

AMANDA:

Oh I've never really thought about it to be honest.

JARRAH:

That's OK. I mean I guess like I'm wondering about- so I am- I would not call myself an artist although I would be more like the Janeway school that like "I like to sculpt heads in a holodeck to relax."

GRACE:

And that's a totally valid form of being an artist.

JARRAH:

But I guess I'm curious about the idea that like you're either talented or you're not. And I mean I think like, obviously I wouldn't suggest that like we create a society where we force people to do things they don't like to do. And that like you know if you're in this 24th century post capitalist society you have a lot of options at your disposal. And if you're like inclined to do something that's not art that's totally cool and like no one should be making you sculpt things. But I also wonder whether there is this like- is she giving up too easily? I mean maybe she shouldn't have it as a career but maybe she should try to get some assistance for a hobby side of things? I don't know.

AMANDA:

Yeah. You would definitely think that in the twenty fourth century they would have some equivalent to youtube tutorials-

GRACE:

Who is in a deep space Bob Ross and where do we find his work?!?

JARRAH:

Yes exactly.

AMANDA:

But for Bajoran sculpture. But I will say in my experience I find art to be extremely personal because I had a career before going into animation, which was market research, and I found that when I was a marketing professional you could have bad days which would lead to be less productive. But it was never so much a part of my identity as the way being an artist is. And if I don't feel- if my mental state isn't good and I don't feel the need for it and like I don't feel the urge to do it I cannot force myself to draw and I cannot force myself to paint. And perhaps for someone like Kira who is just approaching this new occupation of hers because her religion suddenly demands it, no matter what instruction that she could possibly look into it wouldn't help her to develop this. To develop the skill the way you would for a normal hobby which I mean I think there's something to be said about doing art as a hobby because it makes you happy. And then because it makes you happy it makes you want to try and practice. To practice the skill and

learn more about it and improve it. But if it doesn't make you happy then you're not going to be inclined to put in the time to do it on the level of a professional which was the theme of that episode, because she had to suddenly resign from her position as Major to pursue an occupation as an artist because that was what her family did.

GRACE:

It really does make you wonder though if there was a point where there was like an artist and craftsman caste of society on Bajor there would have probably been a good number of artworks. You can't guarantee that it would have all been *good* or that the people doing it would have actually genuinely enjoyed doing it because it was just kind of assigned to them arbitrarily. But It does make you wonder.

JARRAH:

But you also would have been raised in a more supportive environment to like cultivate that.

GRACE:

That's true. That's true.

JARRAH:

And maybe another thing that's important to note is like Kira, like you know Ensign Ro who didn't color growing up and didn't jump on the bed, like they both grew up in a pretty crappy environment where- that didn't have a lot of opportunity to- or encouragement to think creatively or to use your imagination other than like for very practical purposes.

GRACE:

It is true. And even seeing adults try art or artistic hobbies sometimes it can be really emotionally demanding of them. It can be a very stressful situation and that can be so much different when you're sort of from a young age told "OK! Try this! Make mistakes! Have fun. See what happens." versus when you're an adult you have this idea of "OK I have to do it right." It can really drain on people and I've seen it happen when I was briefly teaching art classes.

JARRAH:

I feel like Kira should have been given like some examples of like rage filled political art.

Amanda laughs

GRACE:

That would've been amazing!

JARRAH:

Like flinging red paint at walls kind of stuff.

GRACE:

Yeeeah! Get Kira into that wild expressive stuff! That I could see her really thriving in once she sort of got a little less inhibited about it.

AMANDA:

I definitely do think there is a dearth of political art within Star Trek.

GRACE:

Oh hell yeah!

AMANDA:

Which I find very surprising because it is one of the very common functions of art. And off the top of my head the only times I can think of political art is probably in Cardassian literature, when it's used to reinforce the norms of their society and culture. But other than that like you hardly ever come across any kind of political or counter-culture art in you know for example the human world. I don't know because they're all happy that their needs are being met but- or you know outside of the lore because probably the writers didn't really think that far ahead when building this world.

GRACE:

Also if we're seeing things based mostly around Starfleet and the people involved in Starfleet, we're not seeing a lot of counter-culture when we're seeing people who are happy with the primary culture.

JARRAH:

Like when we see aliens dealing with artwork it's often, and particularly this is notable in the original series, like super wealthy aliens who are like art collectors like in Requiem for a Methuselah where a dude also, spoilers, collects sex robots. Which are also, he sees kind of as, a form of art and it's all very weird.

GRACE:

There's a whoooole episode we could do about that, but yes.

JARRAH:

But yeah he I mean he collects all this art including you know things like, I think he has like a Shakespeare book and stuff like that. So he has like pieces from ea-a-earth history that our

GRACE:

"Ert history" is a combination of art and earth history. Ert history!

JARRAH:

And in The Cloud Minders art is like very associated with upper class-

GRACE:

I'm really glad you bring that up.

JARRAH:

Yes. Did you have thoughts on that?

GRACE:

I do. Well, with The Cloud Minders we get this perception of art being a privilege *of* the upper class both having the means, education, and the luxurious time to produce and appreciate art. And we see it very much as a thing of with the upper class when they say "Well hey why don't we give the underlings rights to this?" it's very much a thing of **snobby voice** "oh well they wouldn't appreciate it. They wouldn't understand it." Both with their knowledge and their technology which is something that you really commonly see with discourse about fine art and education and accessibility. This is, at the risk of turning it into a personal story, I've gotten into arguments with older relatives because they were like "Well the young people today, none of them have like a favorite opera." And it's like, where would they hear an opera? **Jarrah laughs** When would they be able to afford to go to an opera? Who's got the time/money for that? The people who do is (sic) a very specific group and that's not the average person. So saying that the average person is in some way deficient because they don't have an **snobby voice** appreciation for higher art work that they have no means of access to and are being constantly told they wouldn't appreciate. That's such a ridiculous standard. It's classist.

JARRAH:

It feels totally like a Jane Austin thing. Where you have like the people being like **snobby voice** "Oh *she'll* never marry well. **crew laughs**

GRACE:

cartoonishly snobby voice "They'll never understand the beauty of Waaaaaaagneeer!"

JARRAH:

"How many instruments does she play?" So I mean yeah, like it comes from a real place in our society and culture and it's interesting that like Star Trek does kind of pick up on that. They don't really interrogate- I mean I think Cloud Minders actually does a pretty good job. It doesn't like pull out art, on its own as a piece, but it does a pretty good job interrogating classism. So yeah it's kind of interesting that it picks up on that. But you know we don't get to see the like you know the miners in the Cloud Minders and their like-

GRACE:

They could have an awesome folk art scene and we don't know about it.

JARRAH:

They're spray painting the outsides of the caves and it's awesome.

GRACE:

And we've seen in human history this kind of consistent idea of "outsider art isn't quite the same as *art* art." So we're missing out on that. We're missing out on seeing what counterculture in all of these alien cultures could be like.

AMANDA:

Oh we're probably missing out on all this great Cardassian literature in the dissident movement.

GRACE:

Exactly. Right?

AMANDA:

Underground.

GRACE:

The Maquis punk movement must be amazing.

JARRAH:

The Klingon romantic poets. *all 'ooooh'* They're all just writing about flowers.

AMANDA:

And being gentle.

GRACE:

Those are- that's a major subgroup in the Klingon world *Amanda laughs* people who are the touchy feely cuddly Klingons. They're a small group but you know what? They're proud and they're together. And God bless them. Kahless bless them!

JARRAH:

I'm thinking of teen Alexander.

AMANDA:

Yeah their battleground is emotional connection.

GRACE:

Oh that was *beautiful* dude.

JARRAH:

Love *is* a battlefield.

GRACE:

gasps Oh my God! Klingons would *love* Pat Benatar.

JARRAH:

But going back to the idea of socio-political art in Star Trek, which is possibly debatably itself a form of socio political art. One example that I think is maybe the most notable and maybe best example would be Author Author, where the Doctor writes a novel Photons Be Free that inspires a movement of hologram rights. But it's like you know, it's a late Voyager episode. It's a good example, it kind of stands out because Star Trek doesn't really get into that so much about like inequality in the federation and inspiring art. And it also has interesting parts about copyright and like who has the right to claim authorship of their work. And so it really explores art and various issues related to art and a really interesting way.

GRACE:

I really like it also because it briefly kind of touches on this idea of the artist not getting to fully control their interaction with the audience. Which isn't to say that it's like- sometimes your work will be taken and interpreted in the way you don't want. But we do have this history of *struggles for words* What am I trying to say here? Media and art and the people who create it A) not getting much say about how it is distributed or how it is edited specifically, not being allowed to edit it. This case and also not getting to have say on the people who are putting it out and what else they are putting out into the world. So there's a sort of associative problem there. But I was thinking about how kind of, this is a major stretch I know, but I was thinking about the creating of Get Out and the intention of Get Out vs. some of the way it was received. Like the idea of it being made by black filmmakers to say like to a black audience "Check this out. Can you imagine if they were all actually doing this shit we've always felt like they were kind of doing?" versus seeing Kylie and Kendall Jenner tweeting about being like *obnoxious voice* "Oh my god! So scary! So unimaginable!" and being like "This was about your sisters dude. This was about something you are actively participating in."

AMANDA:

Also all the nonblack good liberal people being like "I went to see it in theaters three times!"

GRACE:

Exactly! Yes, and the fact that you can make it for a specific audience but that doesn't mean that that's going to be the audience it's distributed to. And I really appreciate how that comes across in this episode especially when we get that final scene of after the doctor's been jumping through all these hoops and being like "I didn't make it for you guys. I made it for the other holograms and I made it so that other people can get an idea of what it's like to be a hologram and be treated as different." than we get the final scene of the holograms toiling away in the pits and being like "So have you heard of this Photons Be Free thing? It's really provocative. Check it out."

JARRAH:

And like meanwhile his friends are all just super hurt like instead of trying to understand him.

GRACE:

Yeah let's also talk about that aspect of the episode, because in it we have a character making a work that's talking about feeling subjugated and feeling "other-ed", and then the onus is put on *that* character when people around him are like "Well you're saying you feel subjugated by me, it hurts *my* feelings!" and it *groans* that's uncomfortable on so many levels because who here has ever had to kind of stop and explain a micro aggression to someone? And then have them be like "Well you hurt my feelings by implying that I was racist or sexist in any way possible and now I need you to make that up to me!" And just the emotional labor put on the doctor!

JARRAH:

And like, he's really isolated without a community of his peers. So you know, people who have generated that kind of artwork in real life in society have had usually like small groups of friends or collectives to like bolster them somewhat so that they could just be like "Yeah, stop your concern trolling you so-called friends. Like you don't get what I'm doing and you're not listening to me."

AMANDA:

At most the doctor connects best on the station with Seven of Nine, and then that in itself is more- It's not really a peer to peer relationship because of, you know, cause of the Doctor's unrequited feelings and also the mentorship role that he has taken for her.

GRACE:

Yeah. It's a really interesting episode both in terms of looking at it in terms of art as self-expression and art as sort of a protest, and the kind of backlash that comes from that. Which is unfortunate but I don't think they stress *that* enough just this is a thing that happens to artists. Artists don't get to control the companies that are putting their work out, the people who are distributing. Its sticky business.

JARRAH:

Even in the post capitalist society where Voyager exists, *Grace laughs* apparently artists get the shit end of the deal and distribution agreements.

GRACE:

Oh that's bleak.

AMANDA:

I did say earlier that I couldn't think of an example of political art within human culture on Star Trek. But when you were talking about artists not being able to control an audience or the editing process it did remind me of the episode, which admittedly was set in the past, of *Far Beyond the Stars* in *Deep Space 9*. Where Benjamin Sisko is now Benny Russell an unknown science fiction writer for a magazine where they cannot let the audience of the magazine know that he is a black man. And he creates the story of *Deep Space 9* and it is *immediately* shut down. Because it is by its nature it becomes political because the captain is a black man. And

the editor is a cowardly man who feels that the audience would never accept it in 1960s America. In the 1960s?

JARRAH:

I think It was 1950s.

GRACE:

50s. When America was cruddier. But yeah it's really interesting especially when you know that there are actual instances specifically that are kind of referenced in that episode of like, I'm forgetting the comic series, but it was in sort of a one shot comic issue put out where it was an astronaut going through space and then the big twist at the end is he takes off his helmet and you see it's a black man! And it was this message of "Its hope! And anyone can get there in the future! We will have a better tomorrow!" And then *that* was edited and told "No you have to either cut out the final page or change the ethnicity of the character in the final page when he takes his helmet off because that's rocking the boat too hard."

AMANDA:

Yes. Especially because that comic was about the astronaut who is evaluating this robot species whether to let them into humanity's futuristic federation or not. And then ultimately deciding not to because the robot was subjugating an underclass, when the big twist at the end is he himself was a black man. And then the editor said "No, this story cannot go for its original point unless you cut the ending." Which was the whole point of the comic.

GRACE:

The whole point! Yeah. And they are really clearly are drawing some parallels between what was going on in the writers room with the original Star Trek series and lots of "This is what we *want* to do, this is what we want to say" versus "this is what you're allowed to say, this is what we're allowed to put out." And there probably could have been more done with that. But what they did do with it was amazing. And it does make you sort of stop and think about all of the history of Star Trek with "Well what got put on the cutting room floor? What weren't they allowed to do?"

JARRAH:

And also the importance of what *did* get shown to inspire people.

GRACE:

All one thing I really appreciate about both DS9 and Voyager is there's really this heavy attitude of "No, the writer the *writer* is an artist. The writer is having to pull ideas out of thin air and put it together." And we see that with-

JARRAH:

Or have them pulled out of your brain *Amanda laughs* by a-

AMANDA:
Sexy alien.

JARRAH:
Sexy alien vampire.

GRACE:
Yes Jake Sisko as a writer. We see him- he's one of the few characters we get in Star Trek who's not a member of Starfleet and doesn't have any desire to be a member of Starfleet. He's a civilian and as a civilian he's chosen to be a writer. That's what he wants to do. And it's cool that we both know that that that is an option in the future, you don't have to be a part of this militaristic organization, you can just be a person. You can just be an artist. And also that we get to see Jake as a character going through that whole process of "No. This is the thing I want to do." and let's be honest anyone who knows an artist or two has probably heard a couple "Yeah, I told my parents I want to go to art school and they did not take it well" stories.

AMANDA:
Oh yeah. I mean that's why I have a business degree.

JARRAH:
And I think Jake Sisko gets maybe some of the closest that we have to that you know showing art as very personal. Like I love where, I mean as messed up as The Muse is, the fact that he tells Sisko- he's like "I just can't go on this vacation cause I have to write. I just have to write." And I know it's because there's the creepy lady is there, *but* the point also stands on its own that like this, you know, impulse to create- and that you have to like take those moments when you have that feeling.

GRACE:
Jake is very much a writer's idea of a writer character and I appreciate that.

AMANDA:
That a sexy older woman will come in like "I'm just gonna sit here and watch you write because-

GRACE:
"Writing is amaaaazing"

AMANDA:
"nothing is more of a pleasure to me than that."

GRACE:
And again, this idea that if you can do art you *should* do it because *sleazy voice* the ladies are gonna love it.

JARRAH:

laughs Well I mean one thing, you know the prop I'll give Star Trek, is that I don't think they ever portray art as a way that is like you know too sissy for a guy?

GRACE:

Yes. I appreciate that definitely.

JARRAH:

Because definitely there's like this kind of a Catch 22 with art that like on the one hand, the art institution of high art and fine art is male dominated. But then on the other hand, that like boys who want to pursue arts are kind of are treated- or shamed for not being masculine enough. And Star Trek really like has a lot of men have creative pursuits and pursue artistic pastimes without a sense that like this is questioning their masculinity in any way.

GRACE:

Yeah, you have Riker plays the trombone and he's *all man*. *Jarrah laughs*

AMANDA:

Well it's strange because in our society, as you say, art is treated as like elitist and like with gatekeeping but it's also being treated as like totally frivolous and unnecessary to our society which is why education is always arguing about funding it.

GRACE:

It's always the thing that gets cut first is the arts and music.

AMANDA:

But you know within the world of Star Trek, especially on the Next Generation, everyone has a creative endeavor. Sometimes several! I mean the Doctor does not- Dr. Crusher does not identify as an artistic person and yet she writes and produces plays, and you know can tap dance, and many of the characters can play multiple instruments. For some reason Ensign Kim can play both I think the clarinet and the saxophone because at some point he just switched instruments? And Data has like, I don't know, at least five hobbies.

GRACE:

Data's a hobby horse and I appreciate that. As someone who *kind of* knows how to do a lot of things. Being a jack of all trades and master of none, except *he* gets to be a master of all so that makes me jealous.

JARRAH:

Maybe I'm wrong about this train of thought, but it seems to me that part of this kind of disconnect is linked to the history of America versus Europe and that like the elite-ism and institutional sexism goes back farther. And that as with like American independence you see these competing ideas of of manliness and you have these early American presidential

candidates who are really demonized for being “too European” and like “too posh” and like liking soft clothing and baths and stuff. And you get this like rugged American masculine individualism and that maybe this like- that tension is produced by that dynamic of the like existing way that we view art and class through the European history combined with the more like working class, rugged individualism, New World, Wild West stuff from American pop culture and media.

GRACE:

It's just so amazing how much art there is to be made about art. You ever just kind of stop and think about that?

AMANDA:

I guess it's also true that the crew of the next generation was commonly framed as, you know, very refined individuals so it would be natural that many of the many of the characters were multi talented polyglots. There was no “Vulcan Love Slave” going for them. *all laugh*

JARRAH:

One thing that I also appreciate is sort of you know, going back to the Doctor and Data, is this idea that like imagination and creativity and the ability to turn that into some form of art, even if it's you know terrible busts in da Vinci's workshop, *Grace laughs* is like just part of being human and that it's something that is necessary for those artificial lifeforms to demonstrate that they're equivalent to humans or sentient or you know valid Measure of a Man types. And like I watched the Raven, the episode where Janeway was like sculpting and trying to get Seven of Nine into maybe like sculpting or creating a holoprogram. And Seven is like “I don't understand why I should want to do this at all. It's super inefficient” and Janeway makes like a lot of kind of hobby arguments about how it's good for relaxing but then also says that “imagination and creativity and fantasy are an important part of one's life because imagination frees the mind and inspires ideas and solutions and it can provide a great deal of pleasure.” And basically that human progress- the human mind itself couldn't exist without them. So I kind of like that. I like that it shows like the value of art is- it doesn't have to be that it inspires you to invent an early helicopter but it can also just be that it's pleasurable. It can be that it makes you see something in a new way. And it is kind of an important part of our experience and something that it's good not to close yourself off to too much.

GRACE:

And we see her teaching the Borg kids an art class later on?

JARRAH:

I think so.

AMANDA:

Yeah.

GRACE:

I guess she learned something from that.

AMANDA:

Especially because at the end of the episode The Raven, Seven of Nine admits that she was constructing hypothetical scenarios where her family did not get assimilated by the Borg. Which, you know, is a way of connecting with herself and her identity which she was not able to do at the beginning of the episode when she dismissed art as like unnecessary and inefficient.

GRACE:

And we do see a lot of examination, as like you were saying earlier, art as a sign of sentience like with Data and his painting and his fiddling and what have you. But we have lots of examples of art as also kind of a personal need, the need of self-expression, and the sort of a self therapeutic one. The one I'm specifically thinking of is O'Brien in prison in DS9 when he starts doing the little sands mandalas, when he's taught to do that and then it kind of comes up as sort of a Richard Dreyfus in Close Encounters sort of thing of like "Oh he's trying to make them again". But therapeutic art is, specifically in prison, an important thing and has proven to be something that really does help people sort of cope and not feel quite as trapped in that situation. And I always find that bit funny also because I think it's in the first episode of Orange Is The New Black when the prison experience is compared to making a sand mandala in that it's complicated, it can be beautiful, but it is impermanent. And that is- that's a part of art that we don't reflect on enough in the media, I don't think. The fact that art is like that too, it doesn't have to be a great work to stand forever, it doesn't have to be a thing to be proud of. Sometimes just the act of creating is, if not therapeutic, then good for you in that it stretches some muscles in your brain you don't usually get to and it can be very soothing. And I always think of again, because this episode's always going to come up, the flute playing in the Inner Light in terms of that being kind of a thing or part of Picard *dramatically* or is he? Coming to terms with the situation he's in and that being part of his life and being a catalyst for that and accepting the situation. And it ends up being part of what he takes away from the whole experience when he continues playing the flute.

JARRAH:

Yeah definitely.

AMANDA:

Absolutely.

JARRAH:

I will say one example that I think tends towards the more stereotype-y and you undermines some of the previous points I raised is Prodigal Daughter, where Ezri's brother is like trying to get into art school and he's obviously a really gifted artist. I would say he's framed as like the more effeminate brother.

GRACE:

innuendo voice Artists, they're the *sensitive* types you know?

JARRAH:

Yeah well it's definitely a stereotype-y. It's not shame-y necessarily because he's also like Ezri's favorite brother. But then he turns out to be a killer and definitely kind of reinforces this idea of artists as unstable.

AMANDA:

Artistic temperament.

GRACE:

Yeah. *Arteeestes*.

JARRAH:

And this is definitely a gendered stereotype because in our culture we have a lot of male artists who have you know ended up, particularly I'm thinking of people who have self harmed, but also people who have been killed, people who have taken a lot of drugs, and still maintained like a pretty exalted place in our cultural consciousness. You know back from you know- more beyond like Van Gogh to like Kurt Cobain. And you know I don't think that like Star Trek is necessarily reinforcing that with Ezri's brother because you don't know that like you know for centuries from now everyone's like trying to collect his art. But we- I would say like the closest woman example we have of that in Star Trek is Marta in Whom Gods Destroy, and we don't actually know that she actually created any of the things herself, but she's a dancer. And we also get a number of women exotic dancers that are kind of pushed off to the side or like I wouldn't say you know people are like "These are great artists."

GRACE:

Yeah. Dance as a medium does not get its due enough in media. Especially, we talked previously about exotic dancers and performers in our episode we did on sex work, but dancing in general is one of those fields where it is an incredibly time consuming activity. It requires a lot of self-discipline and there are people who do it just because it makes them happy and it's definitely one of those things that's treated as like a frivolous pastime in terms of you can create a great work of art and someone will always say "Oh but you're just dancing around"

AMANDA:

Yeah. Or it's treated like, you know, like a sexy punchline. Like the exotic dancers in the Enterprise pilot who are swallowing the butterflies with their tongues?

GRACE:

It's a *very* specific fetish they're *Amanda laughs* working with there. And I don't totally get it.

AMANDA:

But basically this whole framing is like “It’s the future. It’s exotic. they’re sexy.”

GRACE:

Yeah. Which, give the girls their credit, it’s hard work I’m sure. I assume. Butterfly swallowing has to be some kind of challenge otherwise we’d all be doing it nonstop.

JARRAH:

Yeah I mean if they’re on the Bakku planet they have to apprentice for 30 years to learn to butterfly swallow. *all laugh*

GRACE:

And then you have to like, live with the butterfly for its whole life cycle and it’s a whole hippy dippy thing. It’s rough! I had a point initially here. But if I could branch off of what you were saying Jarrah, also with the way we socially view artists and the artistic temperament thing and beyond you know being self-destructive as artists being destructive towards other people. I mean we can all probably pull a million examples of someone who was, you know, horrible to the other people in their life or was destructive to the people around them but gets that written off because they were a great artist, or they had a great mind, or this genius complex, or what have you. And that’s harmful to keep saying because it keeps happening and we keep seeing people in positions of gatekeeping in all kinds of scenes, I’m going to use my example being most of the musical scenes that I have seen, there’s always some guy who’s been like “No, you can’t tame me! I’m an artist. I think on a level beyond you and therefore I have to hurt you and be a jerk to you and cheat on you and what have you.”

JARRAH:

Yeah. And I don’t even know that we’re in a position to take on the whole “art versus the artist” discussion today. But I just thought of a whole whack of examples of that. *laughs uncomfortably*

GRACE:

Oh yes.

JARRAH:

But yeah. And I think like there are some exceptions of women artists that are as much known for their you know mental health issues but- like Sylvia Plath. But there are also a lot of women who it’s like their reputation is really destroyed by those things and the art is not allowed to come through. Or is like really- the way that they’re viewed is so much- It’s just like it’s really obscured by those pieces.

GRACE:

The mythologizing of the figure over their actual art that they created?

JARRAH:

Yeah. Yeah exactly like It's definitely because I've just been listening to the podcast You're Wrong About, about Courtney Love that I am thinking of.

GRACE:

I've got opinions on Courtney Love let me tell you. But we'll save that for another time, please continue.

JARRAH:

Patreon bonus content.

GRACE:

Hell yeah.

JARRAH:

laughs No. That was all I was gonna say. That there's a double standard and it's, I think, worth acknowledging that.

GRACE:

There's definitely a double standard there, and one thing if I could bring it up because I'd really like to, is when we're talking about Star Trek we get a lot of just sort of the throwaway references to two real life artists and they *are* mostly white guys. And what does that say about a) how art has been deemed worthy and has been deemed like "for the ages" in the past. And how are we deeming- this idea of how we're gonna be deeming that in the future. One thing that keeps coming to mind for me is I remembered when Star Trek came out in 2009 a weird amount of people pitching a hissy fit being like **aggressive voice** "Why would there be rap in the future?" **Amanda laughs** "That's going to be *done with* by then!" And apparently that's come up enough times on the pitch page, for pitching articles to Star Trek dot com, that they're like "Don't don't don't pitch me an article where you're going to be talking about how rap is unimportant and won't be in the future because that's a) classist b) racist and I don't have time to unpack that individually for every person who brings that up." And it's true. How much of saying "No, we're not going to have rap in the future" is based around the idea that it's not an enduring art form or that it's not worthy of being recognized long term and how much of that is based in classism and racism? Plus it's the Beastie Boys! They're the whitest rappers out there!

JARRAH:

I know! Definitely. Which is actually the most questionable reason why that would exist in the future, **Grace laughs** is that it would be the Beastie Boys. I believe there would be rap, I don't necessarily believe it would be the Beastie Boys. That said I believe it as much as I believe that *everyone* knows Gilbert and Sullivan.

GRACE:

laughs Oh my God, the Beastie Boys are the Gilbert and Sullivan of the future.

JARRAH:

laughing Of the JJ-verse. But yeah like seriously, there are white people in my family who think that rap music is *a fad* and a lot of kids will get over all the swearing one day.

GRACE:

They know it's adults who are making it right? Who are constantly performing and have stuff to say in form of rap?

JARRAH:

I think they think that "Lil" is literal. *Grace cracks-up* They think like everyone is there but they're thinking back to Lil Abner and they're like "Yeah it's all just kids making rap music they're only Lil."

AMANDA:

It has been commonly discussed that there's not really pop culture portrayed in Star Trek, and I would love to see what twenty fourth century rappers the kids are listening to. Not any of the characters that we follow, and maybe not any of the children like Wesley Crusher. But maybe on earth there are some kids living within the federation that are up on, you know, whoever the new rappers are.

GRACE:

Well that's the thing, it's the pop culture of today but it's gonna be like the ancient art of the future and saying that only stuff specifically from early 19th century or before is going to be counted is pretty ludicrous. So you gotta at least give that some leeway in terms of "Yeah some of it's gonna carry over" and pretending it's not is pretty dumb.

JARRAH:

Yeah and I mean of course the actual production reason is because of public domain. *Grace laughs* like in this shows especially they don't want to pay for copyrighted movies and music and stuff but they're-

GRACE:

Whereas they usually have the budget to do that in the movies.

JARRAH:

Yeah but like, especially when you're looking at things like plays in Star Trek, where they're performing scenes from plays, and like you know choosing authors to reference you can't tell me that there weren't women, people of color, people from other marginalized backgrounds that you couldn't have referenced or works that were in the public domain that you could have shown

from paintings by women from the Renaissance. Like they existed and they clearly just didn't even think that it was an issue and they just went with kind of the default.

GRACE:

And it's such an echo of the experience- or the understanding of art by the people who are writing it that *this* is what constitutes great famous openly recognizable work.

JARRAH:

Yeah, and they could have made like, a lot of the times we only see a scene right? So they could have made a fake scene from a fake work that seems to us more recent.

GRACE:

Guys, make the effort. Make the bare effort here.

JARRAH:

I mean like, they made Captain Proton based entirely on Buck Rogers right? So like they had the ability and the creativity to draw for more diverse sources and spin off of that and I mean we see that also in the holodeck and all the different holoprograms that we see that are almost uniformly you know European history or ideas of Western future with the exception of the Luau I guess.

GRACE:

And there's a *whole* rabbit hole we can go down *there*. Oofa-doofa.

AMANDA:

I just had a random thought. I thought it kind of a shame that maybe in-universe Bashir has kind of extremely basic taste? *Grace cackles* Maybe like if he was more aware of contemporary earth authors and marginalized artists to discuss with Garak, Garak would find human literature much more interesting than the Shakespeare he was given.

GRACE:

Yeah there's a whole width and breadth of the human experience to draw literature from.

JARRAH:

I think that if they continue to have more diverse writers rooms, which I think you know we have to break down the stats from Picard but I don't I don't think Picard stepped tremendously forward in that regard, but certainly Discovery has. And some of those writers are also working on Section 31. I think that will help, because you know if we had an Indigenous writer who was a real Indigenous writer writing Chakotay then some of what we saw as indigenous art and culture would have been a lot better. And you know today if you had someone you know writing a character like Chakotay they could have been listening to like hip-hop powwow or, you know, like there's all kinds of things that could be considered but are not likely to unless you actually bring in different perspectives into the writers room.

GRACE:

Yeah that's about the sum of it pretty much isn't it? What are we hoping to see in the future in depictions of art in Star Trek?

AMANDA:

I would like to see, well definitely more diversity. Not only would it make the world more realistic but it would also bring more points of view and more contemporary and possibly controversial art. Because you know within the world there is counterculture and it would make, to me it would, make this world feel more lived in. Especially because as I mentioned earlier a lot of the other alien races are allowed to have political art. So question the federation!

GRACE:

Yeah I'd really like to see more definition of counterculture in the different alien cultures we've seen, because there's always a difference between the culture as the culture represents itself and the culture as the people who actually live in it know it. And that could add a whole lot of dimension.

AMANDA:

Yeah. Think of the Ferengi counterculture socialists and what art they would be doing.

GRACE:

Imagine! So I think that about wraps it up for us for this episode. Jarrah where else can people find you online?

JARRAH:

You can find me on Twitter @J-A-R-R-A-Hpenguin or at Trekkiefeminist.com.

GRACE:

And Amanda, if people want to hear more from you or see more of your work where can they find you?

AMANDA:

You can find me on social media, on Twitter, and Instagram and my handle for both of those is AmandaWTWong, A-M-A-N-D-A-W-T-W-O-N-G.

GRACE:

And I'm Grace and you can find me on Twitter @BoneCrusherJenk. That's B-O-N-E-C-R-U-S-H-E-R-jenk, *singing* J-E-N-K! Did it like a radio spot.

AMANDA:

Thank you so much for having me!

GRACE:

Thank you so much for coming! To learn more about our show or to contact us. Visit Womenatwarp.com or find us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram @womenatwarp. You can also email us at crew @womenatwarp.com. And for more from the Roddenberry podcast network podcasts.Roddenberry.com.

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