



THE MAKING OF BEAUTY



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# SHELLS WITHIN A SHELTERED SPIRAL

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**1x 50 min., 4K, 5.1**



## Humans have prized seashells for as long as they have collected pretty things. Why do they have such a hold over us? With vibrant colours and a multitude of shapes and textures, seashells are biological treasures, magical messengers from the sea.

Seashells inspire artists, shape cultures and adorn garments. In many ancient cultures seashells were accepted as currency. In Africa they were bartered among tribes, communities, and royal courts. They enabled long-distance trade across boundaries and between strangers. While seashells are no longer used as money, they still hold mystical and symbolic significance in African societies.

**SHELLS – WITHIN A SHELTERED SPIRAL** is a tribute to the splendour of Africa's seashells, celebrating the intricate marvels that grace the continent's marine realms.

Their story begins in the unfathomable depths of the ocean far removed from tides and rolling waves where a myriad of molluscs manifest shells in every conceivable form. Molluscs include everything from oysters to octopuses. They all have soft, moist bodies, so many species create firm shells for structure and protection.

The material for the colours of the mollusc's shell comes from the water or the animal's diet, so they really reflect the marine environment in which they live.

Molluscs must increase their shell's size as they grow – they never shed their homes. The shell's outward appearance is determined by the creature's rate of growth. It takes about 4 years for a conch snail to fashion its impressive shell. These molluscs stand out as master architects.

Conch snails build their shells into impressive towering spires with vibrant hues and superior strength.

These medium to large snails are also sophisticated hunters with potent neurotoxins and a harpoon-like mechanism to skewer their prey with the precision and swiftness of a seasoned archer. They then trap their impaled victims in the narrow opening of their shell.

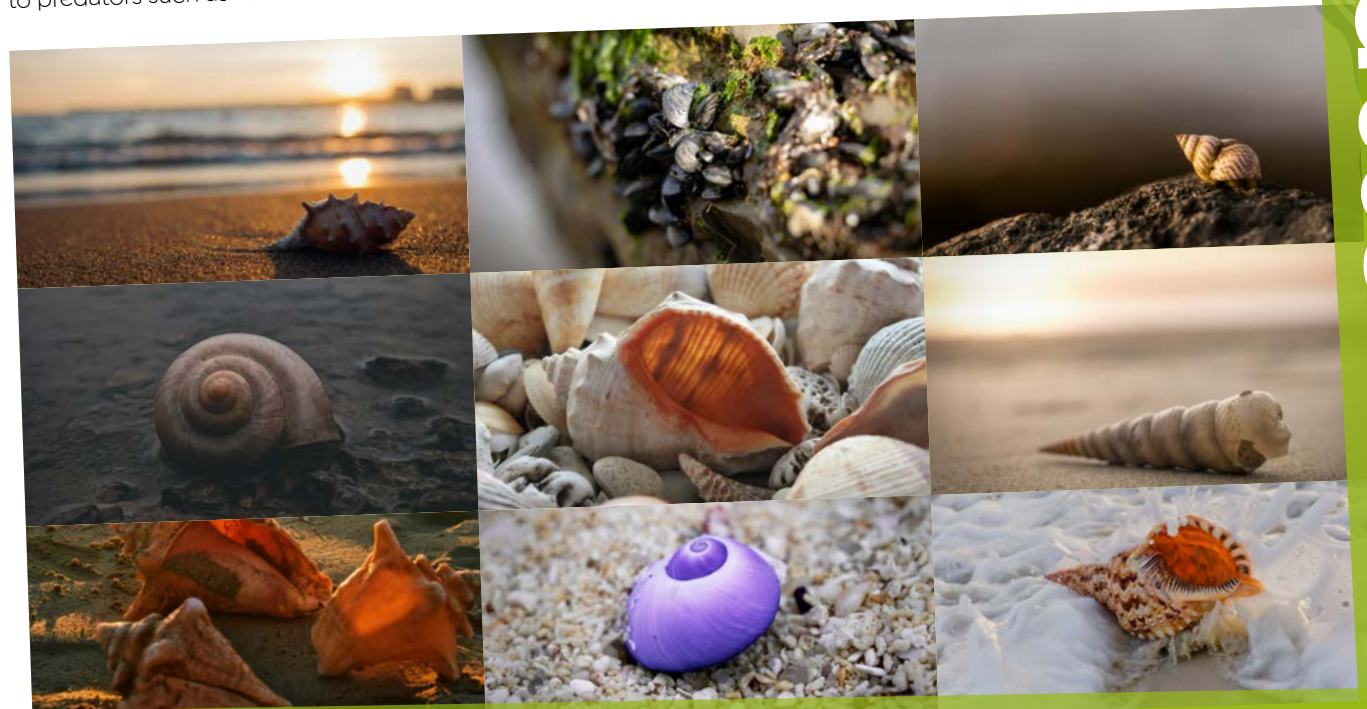
While the conch lives a singular life beneath the water, the violet sea snail floats on the ocean's surface in colonies. The snails craft a raft of bubbles to drift with the currents. Their shells are extremely fragile and the underside is a rich dark purple for camouflage as they float upside down. This keeps them less visible to predators such as fish and sea turtles.

In the wave-kissed intertidal zones, the abalone's flattened, ear-shaped shell resists the relentless waves by attaching itself to the rocks with its broad muscular foot. The shell's iridescent mother-of-pearl interior attracts humans to marvel at nature's ingenuity.

Scallops, mussels, oysters and clams also cling to the rocks. They are composed of two hinged halves, or valves, joined by a ligament. Many of the bivalve shells display a perfect symmetry, like the wings of a butterfly, or human hands.

As we delve deeper into the realm of shells, we unearth stories of survival, adaptation and wonder. Each shell a testament to the resilience and creativity of its maker.

A Terra Mater Studios / Rooted Media production  
in co-production with ARTE G.E.I.E.



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