



## Shell Trumpet

**Date**

900-1200 CE

**Primary Maker**

Purépecha

**Medium**

Conch shell and lime plaster

**Description**

This object is a conch shell trumpet from roughly 900-1200 with an incised design of an anthropomorphic figure with residue of green lime plaster. It was found during an excavation for a school building in Purandiro, Michoacan, Mexico in the summer of 1966. It could be burial goods, however this is unknown. Shell was commonly used to make tools like spoons, ladles, buttons, and harpoons, as well as luxury items such as jewelry and other adornments. Shells were also used as musical instruments, horns in particular. Music from these horns was used in religious ceremonies, everyday festivals, and dances. In order to manufacture the musical instruments, very few structural changes were made to the shell itself. The tip was cut off and the edges of the newly made hole were rounded so that the musician could blow into it. Different holes were drilled into the end of these shells through which carrying straps could be threaded. These shell horns were often engraved or incised with geometric, zoomorphic, and anthropomorphic designs. These objects held tremendous importance to the culture at large or the individual with whom they were buried.

**Dimensions**

12 1/2 x 6 3/4 x 5 1/8 in. (31.8 x 17.1 x 13 cm)