



Shell Trumpet

Date

20th Century

Medium

Shell

Description

This shell once housed a large marine snail. Shells such as this were used as trumpets. The most frequent use of shell trumpets in Papua New Guinea was as signaling instruments. The trumpet would be blown to alert individuals and inhabitants of islands of the return of groups of men who had left their homes for raiding, exploring, etc. They were also used to signal the approach

of a hostile group of travelers. Only one tone can be created by blowing into the hole on this trumpet. As such, signals were sent in the form of different rhythmic codes. These codes included various long and short notes that were grouped together in various different ways.

Dimensions

6 × 12 × 5 in. (15.2 × 30.5 × 12.7 cm)