

Basic Detail Report



Shell Trumpet

Date
20th Century

Primary Maker
Massim

Medium
Shell

Description

This shell once housed a large marine snail, but has been altered to use as a signaling trumpet. It was made by an individual residing on Woodlark Island, one of many small islands among Papua New Guinea's Milne Bay Province. 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 trading, 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

11 × 5 1/2 × 4 1/2 in. (27.9 × 14 × 11.4 cm)