The Sovereign’s Cabin

– A reconstruction and interpretation of the wooden sculptures and wall panelling in the great cabin and stern gallery of the warship Vasa of 1628.

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Abstract

The great cabin of the warship Vasa was adorned as a palace like room rather than a ships cabin, containing over seventy wooden sculptures. The herm pilasters and console heads possibly held symbolic meaning, as did the exterior sculptures of the ship. Why was so much money spent on the cabin? Who was its intended audience? How was the great cabin decorated and why? A study of the archaeological remains within their wider maritime and decorative historical context, can give the reasons for the designing and building of this highly decorative and expensive cabin.

Key words: 17th Century; Decoration; Ship; Cabin; Herm pilaster; Console head; Vasa; Sculpture; late Renaissance: early Baroque
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Dedicated firstly to my father Patrick James Wallace
and secondly to my wife Anya Ison Wallace
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Introduction

Research scope
In order to establish the original placements of the oak woodcarvings found on or near the floor of the great cabin and stern gallery of the warship ‘Vasa’ during its recovery, it is necessary to study the archaeological remains in combination with the photographs and database records held at the Vasa Museum, as well as information connected to the excavation of the ships interior (Cederlund & Hocker 2006). The woodcarvings consist of herm pilasters, console heads, lintels and herm pilaster doorposts or tall pilasters, and hypotheses exist as to how the cabin would have looked (Soop 1992; Landström 1988). The Vasa Museums current life-size cabin reconstruction is based on photographic evidence from a 1978 reconstruction. The latter made use of the best preserved pilasters and console heads, although no attempt was made to determine their original positions.

The great cabin and stern gallery were where most of the interior wooden sculptures were found. In order to determine the function of the carvings and whether or not the imagery used had symbolic meaning or was merely used according to contemporary workmanship or trends, it is necessary to look further than to other ships of the time. Due to a lack of contemporary maritime archaeological material, one must instead look to the style of decoration found in contemporary castle and palace state rooms or northern European churches, these being places where a wood panelling and sculpture style similar to that established within the Vasa can be found.

The study will also investigate what the woodcarvings can tell us about power, status and division of space, and whether or not the decoration of the great cabin and stern gallery may have been unique in a contemporary European warship context.

Research method
The research methods will include both primary and secondary research material: examination of the archaeological remains and historical data comparison via the Vasa Museum database “Marketstore,” literature, personal communication and site visits.

In order to examine the archaeological remains, the thirty two herm pilasters, twenty eight console heads, eight herm pilaster doorposts and three lintels stored in the Vasa Museum magazine rooms will be photographed, measured, and described before matching these with the catalogued items in the Vasa Museum database (see figure 131, example, archaeological recording form, Appendix). The database will also provide the ‘drop locations’ of the remains before their recovery. A number of tables will then be produced in order to more clearly illustrate the information gleaned, including creating groups of drop locations (see ‘7 Interpretation and Reconstruction: drop locations of the archaeological remains’). Information to be recorded includes the distances between original nail holes and nail hole placement. The specific characteristics displayed by each sculpture, and the clues these give as to their whereabouts in the cabin, will also be recorded.
Cataloguing the archaeological remains of the great cabin will provide:
- The state of the primary source material.
- The types of materials used.
- Measurements and drop locations.
- Sculpture description.

The drop locations of the archaeological remains will help place the latter within the great cabin and stern gallery.

Studying what is known about the building, finding and recovery of the Vasa, in comparison with other warships, will establish:
- Knowledge regarding the division of space, decoration and sleeping arrangements.
- What may have been unique about the Vasa great cabin.

In order to put the use of the interior sculptures into context, the general historical background of seventeenth century Sweden will be considered, as well as knowledge about decoration during the late Renaissance to early Baroque period, in order to:
- Establish knowledge about the polychrome art and design of the period.
- Indicate other types-specific locations of similar sculptures and interiors (for example, castles and churches).
- Determine whether the great cabin was intended as a state palace room rather than a ships cabin.
Background

16th and 17th Century Swedish historical background
Sweden in the early sixteenth century was literally controlled by cattle grazing and agriculture. After the mediaeval agrarian crisis, a balanced output and growth of population developed (Weibull 1997:33). Exceptionally, during this period in Sweden, a very high percentage of peasants were self-owning, and this included about 45 per cent of all Swedish farms. In this way, Sweden was completely different to practically all other European countries (Weibull 1997:34).

By the beginning of the 17th century, the great domestic political power struggle between the crown and the nobility had already begun. It possibly started with Gustav Vasa taking advantage of what occurred during the Stockholm Bloodbath in 1520, with between eighty and ninety of the Swedish nobility and clergy eradicated by the Danish invasion. Gustav Vasa restrained all attempts the nobility made at opposing him, leading to the start of a strong monarchy (Weibull 1997:38).

The Vasa dynasty swiftly created a new power structure which took control of the church, and then linked the two power elites in Swedish society, the peasant communities and the nobility, to a complex, innovative organisation with new military and navel technology and the King at the centre. This enabled the King to raise taxes in order to finance the organisation, instead of using the conventional method of mobilising armed forces. In this way, the monarch profited by selling protection to Swedish society in exchange for taxes, as well as administering the military system. Thus this became a ‘double contract,’ with a way of making more money, and the beginning of the Swedish fiscal-military state (Glete 2002:177).

Gustav Vasa’s grandson, Gustav II Adolf, became heir to the throne of Sweden in 1611 at the age of seventeen. He inherited a collection of warships from his father Karl IX: three sizeable, twenty-seven average sized, and sixty-eight small ships. (Landström 1988:41). They were, however, in less than good condition, and constituted a single deck, small-ship navy, mainly built by his grandfather (Soop 1992:13).

This period of Swedish history was littered with wars. Gustav II Adolf initially inherited his nations three conflicts against Denmark, Russia, and Poland, (Soop 2002:12) and peace was achieved with Denmark and Russia in 1613 and 1617 respectively. In 1629, a six-year truce was reached with the holder of the Polish throne, Gustav Adolf’s older cousin Sigismund, who had been deposed as King of Sweden in 1599 (Soop 2002:12) and in 1630 Gustav II Adolf intervened against the Catholic League, being himself killed in 1632 at the Battle of Lutzen (Weibull 1997:45).

King Gustav II Adolf was the one who ordered the building of the Vasa, and the period known as the Great Power Period had begun.
The Warship Vasa

The famous quote by Gustav II Adolf: ‘next to God the welfare of the realm depends on its navy’ shows how much significance he placed on the roll of the navy (Soop 1992:13).

Figure 1, Portrait of Gustav II Adolf, Hofnaegel, 1624.

In the 1620s, Baltic sea power was presided over by a large Danish fleet with an equally impressive infrastructure. Christian IV took an active roll in his navy and employed the best and most innovative shipwrights of the time from the Netherlands and the British Isles.

Gustav II Adolf changed the normal tactics of deploying land marching troops to areas of conflict, by instead transporting troops by sea. Wanting to take over commercially important naval ports in Germany and Poland, he needed a strong fleet that could include both troop and guard ships (Cederlund & Hocker 2006:39).

The expansion of the Swedish navy was planned by Admiral Carl Carlsson Gyllenhielm and Vice Admiral Fleming together with the Dutch shipbuilding brothers, Hendrik Hybertszoon and Arendt Hybertszoon de Groot, who both lived in Sweden. In 1625 a contract was signed for the building of two large warships (each with a length of 135 Amsterdam feet) and two smaller warships, all within four years. Swedish naval shipyards were very busy during the 1620s (Soop 1992:13 & 14) with raw materials for the larger warships provided by the crown and the craftsmen involved coming from both Sweden and abroad.
There is only sketchy documentation regarding the planning and building of the Vasa. It appears there may have been some misunderstanding between the king and the ship builder Hybertszoon, as it appears it was too late to change some of the measurements the king wanted, the timber having already been cut to size and Hybertszoon stating that the timber was already cut although not to the King’s specifications of 120 feet. In March 1626 Hybertszoon has a ship under construction, which turns out to be the Vasa (Soop 1996:14).

The Vasa was heavily armed and decorated with over five hundred sculptures and hundreds of ornaments (Soop 1996: back cover) and a pre-maiden voyage stability test was abandoned amidst concerns that the ship might roll over. Sailing on Sunday 10th August at 3pm in 1628, the Vasa set off along the quay with four sails and a two-gun salute, headed for Älvsnabben in the Stockholm outer archipelago. Already being hit by gusts of southerly wind, once out in the open water, the warship heeled over and water began to pour in through the lower gun ports. She went down in Stockholm harbour, just off the island of Beckholmen (Soop 1996:15).
Recovery, Conservation and Protection

The English engineer, Ian Bulmer, was authorised by the Privy Council three days after the sinking of the Vasa, to attempt to raise her again. He only succeeded in righting her keel, however, and attempts were then made to salvage as much of her valuable cargo as possible. For the rest of the 17th century, fortune hunters attempted to reach the treasure that was still on board, many of the bronze canons actually being recovered. As the retrievable treasure became retrieved and the Vasa gradually forgotten, the ship was only occasionally mentioned in future documentation.

It was the writing of historian Nils Ahnlund in the newspaper Svenska Dagbladet on 29th August 1920 that inspired the amateur marine archaeologist Anders Franzen to attempt to locate where the Vasa lay. In the late summer of 1956 he located the ship and the hull proved to be intact. As a result of cooperation between the Swedish navy and the privately owned The Neptune Company and after 333 years on the sea bottom, in April 1961 the Vasa was raised (Soop 1996:15 & 16).

The Vasa recovery was a milestone in maritime archaeology, and the world's biggest single object ever to have been preserved. The ship was raised in stages through the use of heavy steel cabling tunnelled below the hull, and once raised, the ship's artefacts needed to be conserved. The hull was sprayed with PEG (polyethylene glycol, a water-soluble wax-like chemical) for two hundred and six months, and then dried over a period of several years. The same chemical was used to preserve the wooden artefacts that were mainly made of oak. (http://www.abc.se/~pa/publ/vasa.htm#V.%20Conservation%20and%20Restoration%20Process)

The Vasa is now housed at the Vasa Museum on the island of Djurgården, Stockholm.
Ship Cabin Decorations of the 17th Century

Little is known about 17th century cabin decoration. In order to attempt to understand the symbolism that may have been attached to it during the late Renaissance/early Baroque period in Sweden, it is necessary to consider the influence of the previous two centuries. During this time, European symbolic religious art, which had taken the form of paintings, etchings, carvings, sculptures and other expressive images based on human ideology and attempting to influence the ways people thought, became increasingly secular, plausibly linked to the reformation of the church.

Figure 4, Corby Glen, Lincolnshire, a warning to blasphemers, 15th Century.

Prior to the reformation, the congregation would have stood inside the nave (pews only added after the Reformation) and found themselves looked down upon by the imagery portrayed on the stained glass windows. For example, the depiction of the last judgment may have been shown above and behind the rood screen, warning the congregation of what lay ahead. The people, kept physically and symbolically separated from the building itself, were there to be looked down upon by the saints and angels and their saviour, Christ (Broughton 1996:29 & 64).

Ecclesiastical art as a whole was designed to tell stories to the largely illiterate population in comprehensible and visually striking terms (Day 2003:9). Interior wall paintings, as well as the skilfully carved expressions on the gargoyles adorning the outside of the buildings, would have added to this atmosphere.
English churches from this period subsequently went through a number of changes and are now often whitewashed inside, with the original exterior and interior sculptures removed. This hides the fact that they were once very colourful places of worship. Evidence of the colour can still be found, however, unlike the lack of colour evidence relating to the interiors of the timber framed warships of the period.

By the time of the late Renaissance/early Baroque the influence of the Reformation would have led to a general decline in religious art being used even on the European ships of the period. One exception was in Catholic countries where religious artwork was still being widely used.

The few archaeological remains from timber framed warships of the period include the odd railings decorations, figureheads, single stern ornaments and coats-of-arms. This is probably due to the working life cycle of a warship being not only brief, but sometimes even violent. Often caught in bad weather, it could be caught on the rocks while navigated through uncharted waters, set on fire or sunk. The wood of which it was made was considerably less durable than stone, brick, porcelain or metal.

In order to reconstruct the great cabin of the Vasa, the archaeological remains would need to be looked at in combination with evidence from the period such as ships models, etchings, paintings and drawings; although there is a lack of relevant maritime pictorial evidence regarding interior decoration.

Models, prints and painting evidence from the sixteenth century onwards show the decline of painted adornment, the latter giving way to more sculptural decorations, reflecting the artistic spirit of the age. For example, there are drawings and sketches that show the fleet of King Henry VIII, and provide decorative evidence from the huge warships known as carracks (Soop 1992:8 & 9).

![Figure 5, King Henry VIII embarking at Dover, May 1520, attributed to Vincent Volpe, hanging at Hampton Court.](image)

The existing pictorial evidence shows how the wooden ships became larger and more fort-like between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Soop 1992:8). This gave rise to rivalry between the master shipwrights who yearned to create the most
beautiful ship ever built. This was probably also a contributing factor in the escalation of the use of decoration in the late 17th century (Gardiner 1992:164).

Maritime art was popular in the Netherlands. Just as 17th century Dutch art centred around the caring for children and homes through such painters as Pieter de Hooch (1629 – 1684) and Johannes Vermeer (1632 – 1675) (Slive 1995:149 & 153), it is equally hard to disentangle maritime images from Dutch contemporary art. It was a time of prosperity with overseas trade contributing to the power and wealth of the country (Slive 1995:213).

The artists Willem van de Velde the Elder (1611-1693) and Willem van de Velde the Younger (1633-1707) produced paintings, drawings and eye-witness reports of sea battles between England and the Republic of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands, their work being regarded as an early version of war journalism and giving clues to the exterior ship decoration of the period. (http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/tentoonstellingen/ex_191/maritime-power?lang=en)

The work of other Dutch maritime artists, for example H.C. Vroom (1566-1633), his son C.H. Vroom (1591-1661), C.C. Van Wieringen (c. 1580-1633), A.Willaert (1577-1644) and C. Verbeeck (died before 1637), has enabled Vasa restorers to study similar warships in type and exterior decoration, in order to help determine where the sculptures were originally placed (Soop 1992:10).

17th century Sweden followed Dutch fashions, possibly due to the rise of the Dutch republic. Holland and six other provinces of the Netherlands had fought against Spanish rule (1579 – 1609) in order to emerge as one of the most affluent European powers of the period, commanding worldwide maritime trade, and also being one of the leading navy powers of the time (Honour & Fleming 2002:580). This may have influenced the choice of Dutch born shipwrights for the building of the ‘Vasa.’

Figure 6, Contract between Hybertsson and King Gustav II Adolf regarding the operation of the Stockholm dockyard (Cederlund & Hocker 2006:43).
The Vasa had guns and sculptural decorations, but how the sight of this warship would have been experienced by the contemporary onlooker the day she set sail is hard to appreciate today. The colours used on the external sculptures have been interpreted and reconstructed as part of the work at the Vasa Museum (figure 7). The model reconstruction of the stern makes use of artistic values from the late Renaissance and early Baroque, and almost gives a feeling of being kitsch when looked upon today. These natural, bright colours can be seen as similar to those warning signs given out by colourful and potentially dangerous insects and animals. This could have been another extension to the warship arsenal of the Vasa, using colour as a sign to ward off the enemy. The exterior sculpture work included seventy one grotesque, human and animal console heads and one hundred and fifty five herm pilasters of varying size, mainly around the lower quarter gallery of the starboard and port side of the stern castle. Most sculptures have a flat back, with the wood cut in order to fit into the hull structure of the ship, similar to the technique used in the great cabin. Nearly five hundred sculptures were recovered from the sea, showing different kinds of imagery. Some give indications of power and glory such as the lions, others appear to mock the enemy. There are Roman emperors, Hercules, putti with musical instruments, and grotesque faces appearing out of the woodwork. Also represented are dolphins, seahorses, mermen and mermaids, draped festoons of foliage and possibly representations of the green man.

Figure 7, Model of the ‘Vasa’ in colour, Vasa Museum.

Another form of evidence that can be looked at in relation to the Vasa decoration, is the work done by art historians on the twentieth century full-sized replica of the ship Batavia. The Batavia was a merchant ship built in Amsterdam, also in 1628. It was bound for Australia and even this ship sunk on its maiden voyage. It had over one
hundred woodcarvings in Northern Renaissance style, with grotesque masks, tritons and a lion at the beakhead, and the sculptures were polychrome painted (Touber 2002:5).

Figure 8, Twentieth century full-sized replica of the trade ship, Batavia

No artwork has so far been found showing the decoration inside a ships cabin from this period. Ship models from the 17th century exist in various museums around Europe, for example the model of the ‘Amarant’ in The National Maritime Museum, Stockholm, and this is one of the few models to include any form of cabin decoration (see figure 10, ‘Cabin design and placement,’ below).

The apparent symbolic meanings behind the naming of the ships of the period, in combination with the exterior decoration, helps give clues as to the interior decoration of the Vasa. Model, painting and drawing evidence from the ecclesiastical period of European history and at the time of the fleet system, shows Hispanic sailors and officers travelling between Spain and Latin American and being challenged every time their ships faced a major risk at sea. Protection was sought from this by naming ships after those saints whose attributes included them being protectors of the sea, the most popular name being Mary. In 15th century England, King Henry V’s ships were
receiving names like Holy Ghost, Jesus or Trinity (Tovar 2007: 207). A century later, the Tudors vessels were instead being named Regent and Sovereign, thus substantiating the change from ecclesiastical to royal. It was now the glory of the King, his prestige, power, wealth and national pride, that was of most importance, designed to impress and awe the enemies from other countries. The sovereign aspiration had achieved victory over divinity and the religious authorities (Tovar 2007:208 & 209).

The three thematic areas that appear to determine 17th century ship decoration design were: civil architecture, classical Greek and Roman mythology, and heraldry. Those responsible for the design would not only have used the artistic movements of the day, in this case the Baroque style, but would also have made use of their own vernacular and national characteristics (Gardiner 1992:165) as for example pointed out in the following quote, implying that English ships were far less decorative than French:

‘The influence of the French court on the arts during the reign of Louis XIV in the 17th century was considerable, and there was little similarity between decoration of French and English ships; of all the national styles they were the least alike’ (Gardiner 1992: 165).

Cabin design and placement
Comparative material to the 17th century ‘Vasa’ cabin, including cabin reconstruction, drafted ship drawing, model warships and references to cabin changes during the period, is extremely limited. The only existing great cabin reconstruction with which any slight comparisons can be drawn is the Swedish Kronan. One of the largest warships of the century, the Kronan was built by an Englishman, Francis Sheldon the elder, the ship differing from the dominating Dutch style of the Vasa by being more V-shaped and with a less lofty stern (Einarsson 2001:18). The Kronan was launched in 1665, some 37 years after the Vasa, and therefore the interior can already be identified as being later Baroque (Einarsson 2001:28 & Tangeberg 1993:7) with more gilding than is presumed would have been in the Vasa interior. As can be seen in figure 9, there is a use of wall panelling with column pilasters and sculptures, and the light blue colour used on the walls is not necessarily accurate. From what is already known about its exterior, the interior sculptures of the Vasa would have instead been painted in bright, natural colours.
The painted interior of the ship model of the Swedish Amarant from 1654, is closer in time to the Kronan than the Vasa, even this showing gilt decoration on the furniture and walls, similar to that of the Kronan reconstruction.
Figure 11, model of cabin interior, the Dutch two decker Heinrich Winter, 1671

Figure 11, shows the model of a cabin on the Dutch two-decker, Heinrich Winter, built in 1671. It is similar in style to the Kronan (figure 9) and unlike the Vasa great cabin, is more cabin-like than palace-like.

Much information is known about English warships through written documentation. The inequality of the English Captain’s quarters and that of his officers was significant, and similar to that between officers and seamen. The Captain, Lieutenant and military officers, possibly with the exception of some of the servants, would have been the only representatives of the upper class on board. The contemporary author Boteler describes the early accommodation of a 17th century Captain, the great cabin, as ‘the retiring place for the captain, and where he sleeps and eats’ (Lavery 2006: 168).

On board a warship, the one thing that was always in short supply was space, the space used often doubling up for different functions, whether for sleeping, eating or being a platform for many tons of weaponry. The Captain’s cabin on English ships contained several cannons as well as furniture that would have been cleared away at times of battle (see figure 12). No cannons would have been placed in the Captain’s cabin on a French ship however, as the cabin was considered sacrosanct (Lavery 2006:151). As the great cabin in the Vasa did not contain cannons either, it is possible the Dutch shipbuilders were influenced by the French in their design.

On a warship, the need to have room for the maximum number of men had to be weighed up against the space needed for the officers according to rank. An Admiral could have the same amount of space allotted and divided between a number of rooms, as would have been allotted for two hundred seamen. A seaman also had half the amount of space for sleeping than a petty officer, the latter having 28 inches allotted for his hammock. Whereas the army had officers from the highest social classes, there was a strong middle class element in the navy (Lavery 2006:151).
The stern was traditionally the place for the officers to reside in order that, exactly like the others on board, they could be close to their stations, ready to steer or keep an eye on the sail. As a result, the accommodation in the stern was more comfortable and more lavishly decorated than elsewhere in the ship (Lavery 2006:160).

Figure 12, The stern of a First Rate of approximately 1690, from Phillips print.

Figure 12 shows the stern of an English First Rate from 1690, some 60 years later than the Vasa. The Captain’s cabin is shown as section ‘Q,’ with flintlock guns on the wall panels. ‘S’ section is the Admiral’s or great cabin with two cannons, showing herm pilasters along the walls, lion faces or corbel heads at the bottom of the wooden panels and similar foliage garlands to those on the Kronan. ‘T’ is the wardroom, allotted for volunteers and land officers (Lavery 2006:172 & 173).

The Kronan had the Admiral’s (great) and Captain’s cabins on the upper and quarterdeck respectively, with the officers’ mess on the middle deck, all cabins suitably decorated in contemporary style (Einarsson 2001:216).
The cabins and officers complement on the Vasa
As can be seen in figure 13, the uppermost part of the stern-castle houses the poop cabin, which had a low ceiling and demanded stooping rather than standing (Cederlund & Hocker 2006:157). The next cabin down is the upper cabin, a planked and heavily framed bulkhead separating it from the forward compartment, and an exit on either side leading to the upper quarter gallery (Cederlund & Hocker 2006:159). There were two fold-down bed-benches of double bed size on opposite sides of the bulkhead.

Beneath both these cabins lies the great cabin, behind the steerage or helmsman cabin with the whip staff. The cabin itself originally had fold-down bed-benches on both port and starboard sides as well as fore and aft, and the walls where completely panelled with herm pilasters and console heads (Hocker 2006:161).

The complement of officers on board the Vasa were as follows: Captain Söfring Hansson, Second Senior Captain Hans Jonsson and Vice-admiral Eric Jönsson, who would have used the great cabin; Lieutenant Petter Gierdsson (in charge of ship rigging), Senior Master Jöran Matsson (in charge of stowing the ballast) and another
unknown Lieutenant, who would have been considered middle class and would have shared the upper cabin (both of these ranks able to lead to ships Captain); a Junior Master, one Chief Boatswain and his mate, a Petty Officer, four Mates, a Master Gunner, a Cook, a Professor, four Quartermasters, two Styrmän and a Skaffare. (Hocker 2006: 52) The two army captains who were waiting at Älvsnabben for the arrival of the Vasa and their army companies could also have been considered upper class in the Swedish class system.

Division of Space

Figure 14, The stern section of the Vasa, showing the great cabin and the stern gallery. (Part of the arrangement of the upper gun deck, Cederlund & Hocker 2006:311).

The great cabin was approximately 14 m long. It had originally been completely panelled, using herm pilasters, console heads, quarter-shared length decorated pieces, and built-in benches with fold-down berths along all the walls. Towards the port side of the wall to the fore was a door leading into the helmsman’s cabin. A light transverse bulkhead with a doorway towards the starboard side of the aft wall provided access to the stern gallery behind. The stern gallery was about 2.3 m long and overhung the transom and the head of the rudder. It provided access to the quarter galleries via doors on either side and to the upper cabin by a staircase on the port side, and had built-in lockers on both sides (Cederlund & Hocker 2006:311).
Swedish Stately Mansions, Castles and Churches

**Pilasters and panelling in Swedish stately mansions and castles**
The pilaster originates from the classical architectural column. The dictionary definition is a protruding column built into or applied to the face of a wall, commonly flattened or rectangular in form. Keeping its classical form and giving the appearance of a supporting column, it acts as a piece of artwork attached to a wall. Pilasters were used in Roman architecture, for example on arches. Such classical elements were adopted by Italian Renaissance society and appear in other society trends up until the present day. ([http://www.answers.com/topic/pilaster](http://www.answers.com/topic/pilaster))

![Figure 15](image1.png)

Figure 15, two pilasters, one on either side of the Arch of Titus, Rome (The Roman Forum: 67).

![Figure 16](image2.png)

Figure 16, Maurits House, The Haag, Netherlands (Gerstenbberg 1966:58).
Maurits House in the Haag, built 1633–1664 and rebuilt 1704–1718 (see figure 16) shows column pilasters with flower garlands in between, the latter being similar to those decorating the great cabins on the Kronan reconstruction and the Amarant model. This suggests the architectural fashion being followed in Sweden during the Baroque period was similar to that of the Dutch.

A decorative pilaster known as a herm pilaster traditionally represents an image of the god Hermes or Mercury, as found in antiquity. (http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/ 1O1-herm.html)

Pilasters and herm pilasters are visible in a number of kinds of interior, the space between the pilasters often housed by panelling. Some rooms in Swedish stately mansions have wall panelling and framing of a simple design and others incorporate more elaborate sculptures into the pilasters.

Figure 17, The gentleman’s room, Rydboholm.

The Gentleman’s Room (often mistakenly called Gustav Vasa’s study room) in the tower accommodation at Rydboholm was designed for Per Brahe the elder, nephew to Gustav Vasa, in 1548, and is one of Sweden’s oldest existing Renaissance interiors (see figure 17). The painted illustration in the wall panelling was meant to depict true ancestors, a practice continuing until the end of the 17th century (Bedoire 2004:57). There is more brick wall in evidence here than wood panelling, and in later interiors more panelling and imagery can be found.
An example of this development can be seen at Gripsholm Castle. Duke Karl’s bedroom from around the 1570s, has benches, panelling and painted flower and fruit decoration around the walls. Unlike the gentleman’s room at Rydholm, there is no depiction of ancestors, instead rather a variation on a theme. The use of pilasters on the outside of each frame can be seen, as well as smaller pilasters with top and bottom wooden decorations inside the frame panelling. By the end of the 16th century, additional wooden pilasters were being used.

More examples of panelling and pilasters with varying degrees of decoration can be seen in two rooms from Kalmar Castle. Rutsalen was designed some time shortly after 1553, and Erik XIV’s chamber was created in 1562. Rutsalen, with veneered panelling, was Queen Katarina Jagellonica’s living room, and possibly designed by the chief builder at the castle, Domenicus Pahrs. Erik XIV’s chamber is considered one of Northern Europes finest Renaissance veneered rooms and includes panelling by the German architect Hans Blum (Bedoire 2004:54). Particularly interesting in relation to the research into the great cabin on the Vasa, is the use of the pilasters on either side of the fireplace (figure 20). Above the small classical scrolls is a female corbel head, the male figure holding a piece of fruit with his right hand across his stomach, and below this there appears to be fruit and foliage and a lion’s head at the bottom. The lintel between the pilasters shows a man with a facemask or possibly what is known as a green man. Similar pilaster sculptures can be seen on fireplaces at Skokloster Castle and Skara Cathedral, and are similar to those found on the Vasa.
Figure 19, Rutsalen, Kalmar Castle, after the year 1553.

Figure 20, Erik XIV’s chamber, Kalmar Castle.
It is also of note that the level of lavishness displayed by the Swedish nobility in no way matched that shown in French stately homes. Charles Ogier, who was part of a delegation to ensure that Sweden continued to war on the French side during the Thirty Years War, wrote in his 1634 diary:

‘the differences between Stockholm and Paris are as great as those between the estates of the Swedish nobility and the grandeur of those of the French aristocracy’ (Kylesberg 2006:5).

Following the Thirty Years War, and on the return of the Swedish nobility, interiors continued however to develop in lavishness. Another diary author, Lorenzo Magalotti from Florence, Italy, wrote that he was amazed at the affluence and ostentation surrounding the Swedish stately mansions (Kylesberg 2006:6 & 7).

**Cabinets, chests and church pilasters**
Examples of herm pilasters and panelling can be seen in a number of Northern European churches from around the same time as the building of the Vasa.

The carving seen in figure 21 is by Jacob Kremberg, 1622, and is part of an altarpiece from Gårdstånga Church (Göransson 1977:369). Some of the best remaining herm pilasters similar to those found in the great cabin of the Vasa can be found in churches.
A Baroque ivory and ebony veneer cabinet from the King’s Hall at Skokloster Castle was made in Augsburg, South Germany (figure 22). The veneered pilasters are used to frame the picture within (Kylesberg 2006:17).

The altarpiece from Ilstorps Church, Sweden (figure 23) also shows the decorative use of pilasters (Göransson 1977:361).
The chapel barrier from Gårdstånga Church (figure 24) shows the combined use of wall panelling, herm pilasters and small angel faces or console heads.

Another example of pilasters being used with a Baroque style colouring and mask faces, can be seen in Skara Cathedral from the second half of the 17th century.
In the German Church, Stockholm, we find what is possibly the closest reference material showing what the walls may have looked like in the great cabin on the Vasa (figure 26). Although created 1659–1665, the particular structure or use of the framing is similar to that on the warship, a console head being separated by herm pilasters, and with wood decoration between each framed biblical picture. The carved foliage and fruit motifs are also similar. Many of the herm pilasters run in a male-female-male-female pattern, although on the opposite side of this balcony there are herm pilasters that show a different pattern, for example with a male-male or female-female combination. Also within this balustrade, above the pilasters, are console heads that are smaller than those found in the great cabin, and the herm pilasters in this example are gilded, along with the framing and console heads.

One of the herm pilasters in the German Church has what looks like the face of a demon on it, and this is very similar to that found on one of the herm pilasters from the great cabin (catalogue number 05591, Vasa Museum database ‘Marketstore,’ see figure 96 in the section ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction’).

Figures 27 & 28 below, show herm pilasters being used in Swedish furniture during the same period as the Vasa.
There are also similarities between the sculptures originally placed in the great cabin and stern gallery of the Vasa and 17th century Dutch ornaments (Paul van Duin, Head of Furniture Conservation, Rijksmuseum, Netherlands 2009: pers con).
Console heads
Another main architectural feature of the great cabin is the use of the console head. The console appears as a continuation of the line of the herm pilasters, by being placed between the top of the herm pilaster and the cabin ceiling, giving the impression of holding the ceiling up. There were also quarter-shared length pieces running between them. The consoles, twenty-eight in number, are carved to look like human, animal or grotesque heads.

![Console head](image)

Figure 29, console head no. 05594, Vasa Museum database ‘Marketstore.’

The Vasa console heads are rather deteriorated. Figure 29 shows a lady or a queen with a crown, apparently looking to her left.

The consoles have immediate similarities to some of the label-stops and gargoyles in Medieval English church architecture. They often made use of a naturalism and characterisation that could display a wide range of portrait subjects, whether animal, grotesque human, or simply foliage (Brown 1999:175). Although in churches they were typically made of vernacular stone, some were made of wood, like the sculptures on the Vasa.

Usually gargoyles were placed on the outside of a church, acting as waterspouts, predominantly where there was a parapet, as if to expel evil or keep evil away from the building. This decoration, known as “marginalia,” was very popular during the 14th century (Johnson 2006:55). Gargoyles created during the Medieval period in England were frequently made by travelling masons who were free to use their imaginations, resulting in the production of humorous and grotesque characters, for example showing hideous expressions or sticking out their tongues (Johnson 2006:72).
Figure 30, gargoyle from the north wing, St. Andrews Church, Heckington, Lincolnshire, England.

Figure 31, from Salisbury Cathedral: on the left, male corbel head from the nave south arcade; on the right, label-stop head from the Chapter House.

Some label-stops, interior and exterior, display heads of regal looking figures, with head-dresses dating from the early 14th century. Corbel heads are usually found high up, mostly supporting the roof (Johnson 2006:76).
The Woodcarvers
Evidence concerning which woodcarvers may possibly have worked on the Vasa sculptures comes from The Ship Yard Documents (‘Skeppsgårdshandlingarna’) and The Exchequer Rolls (‘Kammararkivet’) 1625 – 1627. The craftsmen were named as Mester Mårten, Mester Hans and Johann Thesson. It seems that by 1626, Johann Thesson was no longer employed at the shipyard, and the sculptors Giäardt and Petter appear in the 1926 account books. As the shipbuilder Hendrik Hybertszoon was himself an experienced carpenter it is even possible that he may have had a hand in the sculpting. Mester Mårten has been identified as Märten Redtmer, possibly born in Northern Germany, who did work in Stockholm. He carved, for example, most of the sculptures on the organ now at Övertorneå Church, Sweden, originally built for the German Church, Stockholm (Soop 1992:241 – 253). The organ sculptures include dragons and grotesque heads.

There may be more carved work around Stockholm which has not yet been identified as having similarities with the Vasa woodcarvings. It is believed that some of the sculptures at Skokloster are from Stockholm from about the same period, for example the grotesque head at the side of the fireplace (Bengt Kylsberg, Museum Curator, Skokloster: pers com).

Figure 32, Grotesque head from the side of the fireplace, Skokloster.

It is the craftsman Märten Redtmer whose work can be most closely identified to some of the sculptures on the exterior of the Vasa, due to other of his work having survived to the present day. Owing to the deterioration of the sculptures in the great cabin however, it is not possible to positively identify a particular craftsman. What is known regarding the carvings of the Vasa in general, is that craftsmen not only from Stockholm, but even from Germany and The Netherlands, were employed.
5 The Archaeological Remains

The herm pilasters, console heads, tall pilasters and lintels believed to be originally placed in the great cabin, stern cabin and entrance to the great cabin (from the helmsman’s cabin) were studied in the Vasa Museum magazine rooms. A number of measurements and remains diagrams were recorded (see figure 131 for an example of the Vasa archaeological remains recording form, Appendix). Photographs were taken and corresponding descriptions made.

The herm pilasters – pairs and singles
All the Vasa herm pilasters are made of oak, are approximately one metre in length, and were all located in, or just outside, the great cabin. Some of them are very badly worn, although it is still possible to make out some of the markings that can help identify the kind of decoration or meaning they may have had. The thirty-one herm pilasters (which excludes one herm pilaster apparently misplaced after the recovery of the ship) can be divided into thirteen pairs of similar decoration plus five singles. The singles were either meant to be single or they have been unable to be identified as matched with another. Clues as to the original placement of the pilasters include the ‘drop location’ recorded during the recovery of the ship, identification of the original holes via which they were attached to the wall panelling, and the angle at which the base of the pilaster was made. For example, if the base of a herm pilaster slants up to the right,* it may indicate a placement on the port side of the cabin, following the angle of the deck.

Figure 33, Catalogue numbers 05592 & 06583. For full descriptions see section ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction.’

* For ease of description, all pilaster references to left and right will refer to directions from the figures point of view, e.g. “a figure looking to her left / his right arm” etc. (this includes even the angle of the base).
Pilaster catalogue no. 04513 is possibly of a female (torso and head) looking to her left with the right arm crossed over the chest. In the section below, there appears to be a v-shaped decoration above a collection of fruit and foliage. There is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal, and the herm is finished off with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo. The base of the herm pilaster may have been even. Pilaster catalogue no. 04458 is very similar, the figure appearing to be that of a man. Its base was either flat or angled up to the right.
Figure 35, Catalogue numbers 05482 & 05483.

It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 05482 represents a female or male. The figure appears to be looking to the left with the left hand over the chest and the right arm coming down and across the stomach. Below the stomach there is an apparently demonic face, with a series of curved lines below. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the left. Pilaster catalogue no. 05483 is very similar and apparently a female looking to the right, with the right arm coming across the chest and the left arm covering the stomach. There is also a demon-like face below, with the base covered in foliage. The base of the herm is angled up to the left. The two pilasters appear to be mirror images.
Figure 36, Catalogue numbers 05509 & 04457.

It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 05509 is a female or male, with the left arm in a downward position, the right arm being unclear. Half way down the shaft is a foliage or tree pattern with three small circles above a windmill-like shape. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the right. Pilaster catalogue no. 04457 is very similar. Even though the base is damaged, the pedestal is angled up to the right.
Figure 37. Catalogue numbers 06582 & 05612.

For full description of pilaster catalogue no. 06582 see ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction.’
Both herm pilasters catalogue nos. 05511 & 04412 are very badly degraded. The figures are possibly looking forwards with their arms crossed and both of the base sections are missing. The middle sections of the pilasters apparently include a figure-of-eight motif with a vertical line running through it, almost looking like a grappling tong. It is possible this represents the staff with snakes that Hermes (or Mercury) is often depicted as holding.
Pilaster catalogue no. 07065 shows a possible male with a beard, looking straight forwards and with both arms coming down to rest on the hips. The decoration below the hips is of two ‘Cs’ back to back, with the middle section showing two circular shapes and a larger circle below. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the right. Pilaster catalogue no. 06581 is a decoratively similar opposite, with its base also angled up to the right.
Figure 40, Catalogue numbers 04598 & 04798.

It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 04598 is of a male or female. The figure appears to be looking straight forwards with both arms in a downward position. Below the stomach and on either side are two long v-shaped patterns with two small circles on either side of the middle section, and three small humps making an equal wave pattern below. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is too damaged to establish the angle of its cut. Pilaster catalogue no. 04798 appears to be a mirror image and its base is angled up to the left.
Figure 41, Catalogue numbers 05484 & 04835.

It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 05484 is of a male or female. The figure is apparently looking straight forwards with the right arm coming down to the hip and the left arm across the chest. Below the stomach is the faint outline of a face followed by five small circles similar to the placement of the number five on a die. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the left. Pilaster catalogue no. 04835 is similar, although its base is missing.
It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 04836 is a male or female. It is apparently looking straight forwards with both arms coming down across the stomach. Below the stomach are three small faint circles as if in the angles of a triangle with the point at the top. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the left. The pilaster catalogue no. 04734 is similar, possibly with an even base.
It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 00908 is female or male. With the left arm apparently in a downward position, both arms are missing below the elbow. Below the stomach is a long ‘v’ shape, and small triangles pointing inwards, and below these a long curved nose-like shape. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base appears to be even. Pilaster catalogue no. 04450 is similar, with its base angled up to the left.
Figure 44, Catalogue numbers 06580 & 05508.

Pilaster catalogue no. 06580 is apparently of a male with a beard. The right arm is across the chest with the left arm going down to the hip. Below the stomach is a faint moon-shaped image which points down to meet an upwardly pointing triangle shape. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. Pilaster catalogue no. 05508 is similar, with the base possibly angled up to the left.
Figure 45, Catalogue numbers 04522 & 04532.

It is unclear whether pilaster catalogue no. 04522 is of a female or a male. The figure is apparently looking to the right, both arms in a downward position although missing from below the elbow. Below the stomach, is a moon-like, downwardly pointing shape, which is met by a straight line. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. Although the base is rather damaged, it appears to be angled up to right. Pilaster catalogue no. 04532 is similar, possibly with an even base.
It is unclear whether this single herm pilaster (catalogue no. 05292) is of a female or a male. Both arms are crossed over the chest and there is a demon-like face below the stomach. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base appears to be angled up to the right.
It is unclear whether this single pilaster (catalogue no. 05510) is of a female or a male. The face appears to be looking towards the left and the arms are crossed over the chest. Below the stomach there is a walking stick shaped image placed on either side of what appears to be in the shape of a nose and with four small circles underneath rather like the pattern on a die. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base appears to be even.

Figure 47, Catalogue number 05510.
It is unclear whether this single pilaster (catalogue no. 05613) is of a female or a male. The head is turned towards the left, with both arms crossed over the chest and the hands apparently in a position of prayer. Below the stomach are three small circles, with a larger circle further down and a larger oval shape below this. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is possibly angled up to the right.
It is unclear whether this single pilaster (catalogue no. 06882) is female or male. The head is apparently turned to the right with the right arm on the hip and the left arm across the stomach holding an object, which may be a cup. Markings, looking rather like a sergeant’s stripes, can be seen below the stomach. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base is angled up to the right.

For an example of how the archaeological remains were recorded, see a copy of the record form used for herm pilaster catalogue number 06882, figure 131.
It is unclear whether this single pilaster (catalogue no. 06884) is of a female or a male. Both arms are crossed over the chest, either holding an object or in a position of prayer. Below the stomach there is a medium sized circle with a hoop coming off each side, and below this is a long fish-like shape. The herm ends with a foliage lip curvature or ovulo and there is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal. The base appears to be even.
This herm pilaster (catalogue no. 05591) was apparently misplaced following the recovery of the remains from the Vasa. See ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction.’
The herm pilasters – missing ends
There are two end pieces, which have become separated from two of the herm pilasters, with three of the herm pilasters missing their end pieces. It may be possible in the future to study the ghost imaging on the panelling remains from the cabin, and together with measurements from the nail placements, propose which end was attached to which herm pilaster.

Figure 52, Catalogue numbers 04835, 04412 & 05511 herm pilasters missing ends.

Figure 53, Catalogue numbers 04895 & 06895, both of these herm pilaster pedestals decorated with long leaf foliage.
**The console heads**

Figure 54 shows the collection of console or corbel heads recovered from the great cabin. It is made up of three group types: human faces (possibly sovereign or upper class and twelve in number); lions with open or closed mouths (a total of eight), and grotesque faces (eight in number).

Figure 54, console head collection from the great cabin.
Grotesque

Figure 55, Catalogue number 04736

This grotesque console head (catalogue no. 04736) seen both from the front and in profile, is identifiable by large, bulging eyes and a wide, open mouth. The base appears to be even. Similar to catalogue no. 07083 (see below).

Figure 56, Catalogue number 06101

Although this console head (catalogue no. 06101) could be seen to belong to the lion group of console heads, here it is classed as grotesque because of the huge bulging eyes and wide-open mouth. The base is angled up to the left.
Figure 57, Catalogue number 06470
This grotesque console head (catalogue no. 06470) resembles Medieval portraiture of common people, often depicted as ugly and fat, with wide-lobed collars. The base is even.

Figure 58, Catalogue number 06877
This grotesque console head (catalogue no. 06877) has a wide mouth, pointed ears, sharp nose, and resembles a horned gremlin. The base is angled up to the left. Similar to another grotesque console head, catalogue no. 08520 (see below).
This grotesque console head (catalogue no. 07075) appears to have two small horns and an open mouth. The base is angled up to the right.

Although this console head (catalogue no. 07083) could be seen to belong to the lion group of console heads, here it is classed as grotesque because of the huge bulging eyes and wide-open mouth. The base is damaged. Similar to catalogue no. 04736 (see above).
The appearance of this console head (catalogue no. 07283) means it could be part of the grotesque or the lion group. The base is angled up to the left.

This console head (catalogue no. 08520) has a wide-open mouth, pointed ears, sharp nose, and resembles a gremlin. The base is angled up to the right. Similar to another grotesque console head, catalogue no. 06877 (see above).
**Lion**

Figure 63, Catalogue number 04483

This console head (catalogue no. 04483) shows a lion with an open mouth. The top is angled up to the right and the base is damaged.

Figure 64, Catalogue number 04450

This console head (catalogue no. 04450) is of an open mouthed lion. The top is angled up the right, with the base angled up to the left.
This lion console head (catalogue no. 04551) has an open mouth. The top is angled up to the right, and the base is damaged.

This lion console head (catalogue no. 04592) has an open mouth and shows a large mane on top. The top is angled up the right. The base is damaged but appears to have been even.
Based on the mane-like protrusion at the top, this console head (catalogue no. 04735) represents a lion. The base has signs of damage.

This console head (catalogue no. 05523) proves to be one of the hardest to categorise. What is left of the features tends to point towards the lion group, although it is equally likely that it could fit into any of the three groups.
Figure 69, Catalogue number 07066

This console head (catalogue no. 07066) shows a lion with very large nose and mouth and with part of the mane visible. The base is angled up to the right.

Figure 70, Catalogue number 07338

Although hard to identify, the profile of the open mouth, the suggestion of a mane, the shape of the face and the alignment of the eyes all suggest that this console head (catalogue no. 07338) is a lion. The base appears to be even.
Human

In order to identify the console heads, it is necessary to examine the actual remains as well as compare profiles. This console head (catalogue no. 04469) is human, but could even possibly be identified as a lion. The base is damaged.

This human console head (catalogue no. 04482) has a round, smooth face with a flat-topped and curved hood. The base is damaged.
This human console head (catalogue no. 04739) has a smooth, rounded face, a head dress and a lobed necked collar. The base is damaged. Similar to catalogue number 05594 (see below).

This console head (catalogue no. 04837) appears to be human and has a smooth surface and flat headgear. The base is even.
This human console head has a smooth, rounded face, a head dress and a lobed necked collar. The base is damaged.

This console head (catalogue no. 05593) is possibly of a woman, with the base angled up to the left.
This human console head (catalogue no. 05594) has a smooth, rounded face, headgear and a lobe necked collar. The base of the console head is even. Similar to catalogue no. 04739 (see above).

This console head (catalogue no. 06471) shows a lady of high importance or a sovereign with flat headgear and a lobed collar. The base is even. Similar to catalogue no. 06873 (see below).
The two human console heads shown here (catalogue nos. 06864 & 06871) were possibly female and located in the panelling around the bulkhead, with one on either side, due to the sharp angles cut away at the tops of the heads. They have a relatively smooth surface, a lobed neckline and what appears to be a hood-like covering.
This console head (catalogue no. 06873) is similar to 06471 (see above) and shows a lady of high importance or a sovereign. Flat headgear and a lobed collar can be seen. The base is even.

This console head (catalogue 07084) appears to be possibly the only male face, with a beard and open mouth. As can be seen by the profile, the back of the head looks like two steps, implying that it may have had a different kind of fixture than the other console heads. The base is damaged.

For an example of how the archaeological remains were recorded, see a copy of the record form used for console head catalogue number 07084, figure 131.
The Lintels

Figure 83, catalogue numbers 10201, a cartouche; and 00503 & 00393, two lintels.

Catalogue no. 10201: a cartouche with a Swedish crown held by a triton on either side. For a full description and placement map, see ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction.’ Catalogue number 00503: the decoration on the front of the lintel shows foliage in an interlacing type pattern. The part that would be hidden when the door was shut appears to have roses on either end, with a cover in between. Catalogue no. 00393: although very similar to catalogue number 00503 on the left, this is far more worn.
The herm pilaster doorposts

Figure 84, catalogue number 00399  Figure 85, catalogue number 00508

For more information regarding catalogue nos. 00399 & 00508, see ‘7 Interpretation and reconstruction.’
These two doorposts (catalogue nos. 05638 & 05971) are a similar pair and would have been located at the back of the great cabin. Both figures appear to be female and both have their arms down by their sides. Below each stomach is a demon-like face, and below these possibly fruit. Below each borderline appears to be a woman’s face, possibly that of an angel.
Above the female head on this herm pilaster doorpost (catalogue no. 23108) is an iconic capital.

Unfortunately, the area below the stomach is very badly worn making any identification difficult.

At the end of the shaft there is a small putto. At first glance it looks as if there is a crown above its head, which could imply royal succession, however it is more likely to depict the carrying of a basket of fruit, the lines visible being the weaving in the basket.

It is also possible that there is a woman’s face below the borderline, but again this is not completely clear.

The putto carrying the basket of fruit makes it not dissimilar from the shorter doorpost herm pilaster catalogue no. 00399 (see above).
This herm pilaster doorpost represents a female, but is badly worn. Above the female’s head is an iconic capital. Both arms are at the sides of the body.

Below the stomach appears what seems to be an iron-like ring, with three ropes attached, similar to the kind that would have been seen at a seaport. The ropes have highly decorated ends.

Above the borderline appears to be a lion.

The same style of decoration, with luxuriant, festoon-like ends to the ropes, can be seen on catalogue no. 00508.
These herm pilasters doorposts or tall herm pilasters (catalogue nos. 07116 & 05446) are a similar pair, with a style and motifs appearing completely different to those on the rest of the herm pilasters. They were located on either side of the entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin, with the lintel cartouche (see figure 83, catalogue no. 10201 above) over the door in between them. Both of the herm pilasters show females torsos, arms held as if mirror images of each other (i.e. the left arm of catalogue no. 07116 down on the stomach with the right across the chest, and catalogue no. 05446 doing the opposite). Below the stomach appears scrollwork, which could even be the tail of a mermaid (complimenting the mermen or tritons appearing above the door as part of the cartouche) and there is strong border work throughout. The motif used above the figures heads could by derived from Vredeman de Vries’s popular book about herm pilasters from 1560, ‘Caryatidum’ (Soop 1992:226). Both are made of oak and may well have been the work of the same woodcarver.
Earlier reconstructions of the Vasa great cabin

In 1978, a reconstruction of the Vasa great cabin was assembled using all of the console heads and herm pilasters together with wall panelling and fittings. The herm pilaster and console head shown in figure 91 show examples of the archaeological remains that were used as a basis for the reconstruction.

Figure 91, catalogue number 05508 & 06471.

The purpose of the 1978 reconstruction was not to identify the original positions of the remains, but rather to give a general idea of how the great cabin would have looked. The reconstruction also used modern screws to fix together the remains, which has subsequently complicated the identification of the original nail holes.
Figure 92. Reconstruction of the great cabin, 1978.

Figure 93. Reproduction of the 1978 reconstruction at the Vasa Museum.
Figure 94 shows Björn Landström’s addition of colour to a drawing of the great cabin reconstruction. A Baroque colour scheme is used, together with the use of coats of arms, the latter in a rather similar way to the use of coats of arms inside Skokloster Church. Until colour analysis has been carried out, it won’t be known how accurate the colour reconstruction is.

Figure 94, Reconstruction using Baroque colour scheme and coats of arms (Landström 1988:155).
Another illustrative reconstruction is the one shown in figure 95 (Görabsson 1994:54). As well as herm pilasters, console heads, separating quarter-shared length pieces and panelling, benches are shown along the port side that can be turned into beds.
7 Interpretation and reconstruction

Description, similarities and interpretation
The representative decoration of some of the most well preserved archaeological remains can be discussed, alongside the illumination of some similar contemporary counterparts, in order to indicate individual symbolic meanings.

Example herm pilasters
One place where herm pilaster sculptures similar to those found on the Vasa can be found, is in the German Church, Stockholm. One of the examples, from about 1659 (see figure 97) has a female torso with a demon-like face below and similarities with, for example, herm pilaster catalogue no. 05591 (see figure 96).

Figure 96, catalogue number 05591

Figure 97, herm pilaster at the German church, Stockholm.

Description catalogue no. 05591: Approximately one metre in length and made of oak. Female torso with face looking forwards and iconic scroll above the head. Left arm forwards and upwards with right arm across the chest holding an object, clothing apparently contemporary. Top of shaft shows a demon-like face with shaft decoration below ending in a foliage lip or ovulo curvature. There is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal of the herm pilaster.
Other herm pilasters with demon-like faces belong to the exterior decoration of the warship, for example, catalogue numbers 05804, 05913, 05948 and 05947. (Soop 1996:103) Both these and the interior pilasters could represent the equivalent of the grotesque rain expelling gargoyles found in the marginalia on church exteriors, symbolic of the church cleansing itself and expelling or suppressing evil, and very popular during the 14th century (Johnson 2006:89).

Herm pilaster catalogue no. 06582

Description: Approximately one metre in length and made of oak. Male with appearance of a beard, looking towards the right and with iconic scroll above the head.

Contemporary clothing with neck ruff, tunic and belt.

Right arm across the chest. The right hand, which is missing, would possibly have covered the heart. Left arm is in a downward position, placed on top of a demon-like face. The decoration below the demon face is unclear, but could represent foliage on either side with two rings, vertical twine or a scabbard, ending in a foliage lip with small upright scrolls.

There is a long leaf foliage divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal of the herm pilaster.

The base of the herm pilaster is even.

Figure 98, catalogue number 06582

A similar herm pilaster to catalogue no. 06582 (see figure 98) exists in the German Church, Stockholm. If the missing hand had been placed across the heart, this could have been symbolic. For example, it may have represented a knight swearing an oath of allegiance to the King, deeming to vanquish all evil with the use of the sword, and
accomplishing the defeat of the demon-like face shown underneath his hand. The great cabin reconstruction in the Vasa Museum has a copy of this pilaster behind the officer sitting at a table.

Figure 99, catalogue numbers 06583 & 05592.

Description of herm pilaster catalogue nos. 06583 & 05592: Both approximately one metre in length and made of oak. Female torsos, with the face of 06583 looking towards the left and that of 05592 looking towards the right. Both pilasters have similar decoration: an iconic scroll above the head, right arm across the bare chest with right hand holding an unclear object (possibly a mirror), left arm placed down on the pushed-out stomach. The top of the shaft appears to represent Poseidon’s trident with possible sea horses on either side and sea foliage running down the centre, ending in a foliage lip with small upright scrolls. Each figure gives the impression of being a mermaid. There is a divide between the shaft decoration and the pedestal, ending with two turned up flaps on either side, possibly showing the mermaids forked tail. Long leaf foliage on the pedestal, with the base angled up to the left.
It would be logical for sculptures on a ship to include imagery connected with the sea. Mariners in the 17th century feared mermaids, who were said to use their voices in order to entice sailors to their deaths. They had the ability to raise or calm the seas. The trident symbolises a three-pronged weapon used against the enemy, and a mirror was often associated with mermaid imagery. (http://www.answers.com/topic/mermaid) These herm pilasters may have represented a warning against the dangers of mermaids. By having one mermaid look to the left and the other to the right, the implication of herm pilaster pairs is strengthened.

As can be seen by herm pilaster catalogue no. 04835 (figure 100) some of the pilasters are very badly worn, making interpretation and placement difficult.

Description of herm pilaster catalogue no. 04835.
Made of oak and badly worn.

Figure 100, catalogue number 04835.
**Example console heads**

As illustrated above in ‘4. Swedish Stately Mansions, Castles and Churches,’ head sculptures similar to those represented by the console heads from the Vasa great cabin, can be found on the church buildings of Western and Northern European countries, as well as on the outsides of stately homes, over lintels or in connection with windows (see figures 30 & 31).

Even though the great cabin console heads are generally very badly worn, the spherical outline of the heads in combination with some of the facial characteristics give clues as to what they may have represented. Their height and width varies (from 14cm to 18 cm in height, and 10cm to 11 cm in width) and they are all made of oak with the backs cut differently according to their particular position on the cabin wall (Soop 1996:220).

![Console head catalogue number 06101, 06491, 06470 & 06873.](image)

Console head catalogue number 06101 (figure 101) appears to be either a queen or a maiden because of the small crown and/or veil that can be seen. In Medieval churches, representations of patron lords and ladies were often placed in high places in order to reflect their standing in the community and their benevolence to the church. Even kings and queens could be placed on the walls.

Console heads catalogue numbers 06491, 06470 and 06873 have grotesque physiognomy. Medieval sculptures often depicted the common people as being grotesque, in direct contrast to the finer features given to the lords, ladies and sovereigns. The grotesque console catalogue number 08520 (figure 102) has a mouth that is open wide, pointed ears, sharp nose, and gives an unnatural, gremlin-like impression. This again may be in the marginalia tradition, representing the expelling of evil.
The other great cabin console heads represent lions, even though some of them are harder to identify than others. The outline of a face with a mane, the alignment of the eyes and the shape of the open mouth on catalogue no. 07338 (figure 103) identifies the decoration as being that of a lion. The lion symbolises the king of the beasts, dominance, leadership and stately power, and would have been symbolic of the King of the realm.
**Example herm pilaster doorposts**

There are eight herm pilaster doorposts or tall pilasters that were placed in the great cabin on either side of the exits and on either side of the entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin. It is only on the doorpost pilasters that putti have been identified, although they may have appeared on other herm pilasters without them being identifiable. The tall pilasters are of sixteenth century Flemish type (Soop 1992:225) and use sea imagery, for example mermaids, as well as indications of far flung lands. Catalogue no. 00399 for example, depicts a figure in a turban and beard. The use of putti is discussed beside figure 104.

Description: catalogue no. 00399, shows a male torso with very clear limbs and muscles. The figure is looking to the left and has a beard and turban, possibly a reference to being a native of Persia. Above the turban is an iconic capital.

The right arm is in a downward position and points outwards from above the hip, with the lower part of the lower arm missing. This may possibly have held an object. The left arm is also down, with the hand on the hip. Below the hand it appears that the bottom part of the torso has material wrapped around it and there is scrollwork on the sides.

Long leaf foliage is beneath the torso, and below this a putto. It looks almost as if the putto is carrying a crown above its head. However, the object is a basket of fruit, recognisable from the weave of the basket. The fruit symbolises prosperity, wealth and abundance. As colour would almost certainly have originally been used, this would also have had symbolic meaning. For example, red grapes could have symbolised both fertility and, in a biblical sense, wine becoming blood. Putti also take an almost identical form (except for the lack of wings) in Medieval churches in the form of cherubs. As there appears to be a distinct lack of biblical references within the cabin, however, apart from the use of the demonic face, the putti would therefore be indicative of a symbol of abundance. Another tall pilaster that shows a basket-carrying putto is catalogue no. 23108 (see figure 88).

According to the preliminary paper on the Vasa sculptures written by Sten Karling in 1959, the basket-carrying putti were inspired by the work of the Dutchman Cornelis Bos (Soop 1992: 226)

The end of the tall herm pilaster is sharply angled up to the left, indicative of it having fitted into a particular area.

Figure 104, catalogue number 00399.
Description: catalogue no. 00508, more worn than the similar tall pilaster catalogue no. 00399 (figure 104) appears to have the same woodcarving style. This possibly also had a male torso with limbs, muscles, turban and beard, and is looking to the right. There is an iconic capital above.

The right arm is in a downward position and points outwards above the hip, with the lower part of the lower arm missing. This may possibly have held an object. The left arm is also down, with the hand on the hip. Below the hand it appears that the bottom part of the torso has material wrapped around it and there is scrollwork on the sides.

Below the material appears a scroll-like object, and below this an iron-like ring, with three ropes apparently attached and which end in some kind of prolific decoration, possibly similar to the kinds of ropes found at a seaport.

The end of the pilaster is angled sharply up to the left, meaning it would have fitted into a particular part of the interior.

The same decorated ropes design appears on tall pilaster catalogue no. 00269 (figure 89).
The cartouche lintel

This elongated scrollwork oak cartouche is very well preserved, and has a supporting triton on either side of the royal crown, the latter being framed by two fruit-bearing horns. The tritons have large sweeping tails arching towards the backs of their heads and carved with small fish scales. The fact that each triton is leaning backwards, gives the impression of them holding a great weight, in this case the scrollwork behind the crown, similar to that of a spiral-shaped shell. Both tritons have thick curly hair and bushy beards with outlined nose and eyes and strong looking torsos and arms with clearly defined muscles. Each triton also appears to be holding an apple or some other fruit, and they appear to be either set down on roman acanthus leaves, or maybe these leaves represent the waves from the sea.

On top of the crown, which forms the centrepiece of the cartouche, is a cross on top of an orb. The cross symbolises Christianity, with both the cross and the orb representing the power of the sovereign, the crown being the supreme authority on board the ship. The crown is made up of two different types of flowers: a fleur-de-lis and another flower with four visible petals.

Tritons, or mermen, are the sons of Poseidon and Amphitrite, god and goddess of the sea. They often carry a trident as well as a trumpet to calm the seas. The fruit symbolises prosperity, wealth, sanctity, fertility and abundance, and the horns in this case appear to represent horns of plenty.

Interpretation of sculptural symbolism in the great cabin and stern gallery
The archaeological remains within the great cabin did not weather well in the sea. They are very badly worn and are possibly the hardest to interpret of all the Vasa sculptures in the collection, although from even the mostly badly worn sculptures it is possible to glean some information regarding how they may have looked. The bases have been cut to different angles to match particular positions on the walls. Each herm pilaster has a smooth plain back with typically two nail holes. They are carved from oak and it appears that no two are exactly the same. One of the best examples of herm pilaster is catalogue no. 05591, misplaced in the collection, with only a photograph from just after the recovery of the Vasa remaining.
The console heads are identified into three groups: the lion as a symbol of stately power and representing the sovereign; the human representing the nobility, and the grotesque representing the poor, common, ugly people showing the evil within us all. It is possible that these three console head types would have alternated around the walls of the cabin.

The herm pilasters around the panelling are made up of demon-like faces with knights and mermaids and male and female torsos above, and with elegant festoons of fruit, long leaf foliage, and images of tridents, seahorses and sea themes below. As the herm pilasters have been identified as being predominantly in pairs, these would possibly have been placed in a bilaterally symmetrical system with male and female pilasters appearing in succession. The entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin also has a sea theme with what appear to be mermaids on either side of the door and mermen featured in the cartouche above. It can be presumed that all the sculptures would have been painted in bright, natural colours, echoing the painting of the sculptures on the exterior of the ship.
Drop locations of the archaeological remains.
To help identify where the herm pilasters and console heads were originally situated in the great cabin, the drop locations of the various sculptures that were recorded during the recovery of the ship can be used. These are the locations where the herm pilasters and console heads had fallen from their original positions.

Figure 107 below, shows the location of the beams running through the great cabin. The appropriate beam numbers are from number 21 (nearest to the helmsman’s cabin) to number 27 (towards the stern). By making use of the Vasa Museum database ‘Marketstore,’ the finds can be mapped out according to their beam locations, and whether they lie towards the port or starboard sides of the cabin.

Figure 107, beams 21-27 are found running through the great cabin.
(Based on schematic plans from Cederlund & Hocker 2006: 301)
### Herm pilaster locations

Herm pilasters remains found in the great cabin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilaster nos.</th>
<th>Catalogue nos.</th>
<th>Beams</th>
<th>Locations</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>HP2</td>
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<td>04457</td>
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Outside the Vasa

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<th>Beams</th>
<th>Locations</th>
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Figure 108, Herm pilasters remains found in the great cabin and outside the ship
### Herm pilaster groups

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<td>Middle</td>
<td>HP1</td>
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<td>27-26</td>
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<td>HP8</td>
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<td>Grp5</td>
<td>27-26</td>
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<td>HP25 - HP29</td>
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Figure 109, herm pilaster groups

Figure 110, herm pilaster drop locations according to groups identified in table above.
**Console head locations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Console nos.</th>
<th>Cat nos.</th>
<th>Beams</th>
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Figure 111, console head drop locations

**Console heads groups**

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Figure 112, console head groups
Figure 113, console head drop locations according to groups identified in table above
### Herm pilaster doorpost locations

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Figure 114, Herm pilaster remains found in the great cabin/outside the ship

Figure 115, Herm pilasters doorpost or tall pilaster drop locations according to groups identified in table above (lintels not covered as locations already previously positively identified).
**Placement reconstruction of the remains**

When inspecting the great cabin area of the Vasa, it becomes clear that trouble was taken to make sure the method of attaching the sculptures to the walls would hide the attaching nails. Even though the drop positions of the herm pilasters and console heads have been recorded and some nail holes can be identified on the backs of the sculptures, the sculptures would have been nailed onto the panelling and the panelling then added to the ships structure, making sure no nails were visible from the cabin.

![Figure 116, the great cabin structure.](image)

**Entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin**

Below is a reconstruction of how the entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin would have looked, with the two herm pilaster doorposts (catalogue nos. 07116 & 05446) on either side of the door and with the lintel (catalogue no. 10201) above the door (figure 117).
Figure 117, Entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin. Doorpost herm pilasters catalogue nos. 07116 and 05446 respectively, with lintel catalogue no. 10201 above the door.

Herm pilaster doorpost and lintel placements in the stern gallery
Four of the doorpost pilasters were originally inside the stern gallery with the remaining two possibly in the great cabin. Below, in figure 118, is a reconstruction of how the herm pilaster doorposts and lintels would have been placed inside the stern gallery. The herm pilaster doorposts 00508 and 00399, which were opposite each other across the cabin (one on the starboard and one on the port side) would have appeared on one side of their respective doors, with door hinges placed on the opposite sides of each doorpost.
Figure 118, herm pilaster doorpost and lintel placements in the stern gallery.
Herm pilaster doorpost placements in the great cabin

Two of the tall herm pilasters believed to have come from inside the great cabin were found outside the Vasa, probably as the result of the collapsing at the stern of the ship. Based on the reconstruction of the stern gallery in figure 118 above, with the main door to the great cabin having a pilaster on each side and only one pilaster on the sides of the doors at the other exits/entrances, it is possible that the two exits inside the great cabin (leading to the stern gallery and helmsman’s cabin) only had one tall pilaster against the side of each door, and with door hinges on the other. However, this has not been verified.

Figure 119, possible placement of the herm pilaster doorposts catalogue numbers 23108 & 00269 inside the great cabin. Both tall herm pilasters had notches cut at the top of the back of each herm, indicating they were cut in order to fit over the top of another object.
**Panel section reconstruction**

The panelling from the walls of the great cabin is kept off site in storage outside of the Vasa Museum. The panelling has some ghost imaging showing where some of the original sculptures, console heads, decoration panels and herm pilasters were attached. Below is a reconstruction of one section of the cabin panelling including the sculptural archaeological remains.

![Cabin panelling schematic, with possible placements.](image)

Figure 120, Cabin panelling schematic, with possible placements.
The forward of the great cabin has a mast trunk, which would have had enclosed panelling. It is possible that the two console heads catalogue nos. 06871 and 06864 would have been up in the corners of this panelling as is shown in figure 121 below.

Figure 121, possible placement of console heads catalogue numbers 06871 & 06864 on the mast trunk in the great cabin.
The combined symbolism of the individual archaeological remains provides clues as to what image would have wanted to be portrayed by the overall sculptural design of the great cabin and stern gallery. A lot of money was spent making the great cabin into a palace-like room, making sure the craftsmen hid all the nail holes and blemishes from an audience of the highest social order, presumably including the King himself. The imagery used appears to represent the King assembling all his subjects together, whether animal or human, of noble birth or common, and even including sovereignty over creatures from the sea, whether mermaid, merman or seahorse. It is as if the King is holding court in the great cabin with all the power of the state over his subjects.
Conclusions

This research has examined the archaeological remains from the great cabin and stern gallery of the warship Vasa (including the entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin) in order to identify how they would have originally been arranged and what meanings would have been portrayed. This has been approached against a historical backdrop lacking in comparative contemporary maritime archaeological material. However, some model, print and painting evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries help show a progression from painted adornment in the early sixteenth century to more sculptural decoration in the seventeenth century, representing an explanation as to why warships of the period became more embellished amidst possible rivalry between master shipwrights. It also appears that the most lavishly decorated part of the ship in this period was the stern, due to this being the accommodation and main working area of the officers. However, so far no artwork has been found that shows the decoration inside a ships cabin, in order to be able to compare this with what is known about the archaeological remains of the Vasa.

We know that the exterior of the Vasa was painted in bright, natural colours and that the exterior sculptures drew on several influences from classical Greek and Roman mythology as well as heraldic sources, giving us clues about the imagery used in the great cabin and stern gallery. Another source of information has been provided through actual or pictorial visits to a number of contemporary castles, stately homes, palace state rooms and northern European churches, in order to examine the wood panelling decoration style that has proved to be similar to that established on the Vasa. Even though some of the most similar herm pilasters and console heads are found in the German Church, Stockholm, their woodcarving differences lead to the suggestion that a contemporary master craftsman’s book or catalogue of sculptures could have been in existence. That sculptural thematic ideas were chosen by a designer from such a book is not unthinkable. It is also interesting that some of the sculptures on the organ originally built for the German Church and now housed in Övertorneå Church were crafted by Mårten Redtmer, identified as Mester Mårten on the payroll of the Vasa as one of its woodcarvers. The design of the benches at Gripsholm Castle is not dissimilar to that of the benches in the great cabin of the Vasa, and the development of wall panelling and decoration from less to more in the second half of the 16th century was certainly reflected in the use of more sculptures by the time the Vasa was built, state room adornment very probably having an impact on the decoration of ships great cabins. Another source of comparative information was provided by the only existing great cabin reconstruction of a ship from the 17th century, the Kronan, although the Kronan was launched some thirty-seven years after the Vasa, and it has been identified as having a later Baroque interior, presumably more gilded than the Vasa great cabin would have been. The evidence found in Swedish stately mansions, castles and churches leads to the conclusion that design fashion from both the Netherlands and Germany had an influence on the interior design of the Vasa. As the wall panelling between herm pilasters was often painted with coats of arms, flowers or other scenes, any evidence that may be found through possible future paint analysis on the interior archaeological remains of the Vasa will be of great interest.
The great cabin represented the boundary between the classes on board ship, and it also follows that the decoration would have been designed with upper ranks and upper social class visitors in mind. Based on what is known about the great cabin and the similarities between the Swedish navy and the class system in the British navy, the senior officers of the Vasa (Captain, Second Senior Captain and Vice-admiral) were representatives of both on board senior officers and the lower aristocracy, and therefore would have resided in the great cabin. These officers would have been fairly well educated, and would have understood both the decorative meanings of the sculptures and the importance of the decorative fashion of the period. The Vasa represents the only example of multiple beds in a great cabin existing today. Later on in ships cabin design, the Admiral or Captain would have resided alone in the great cabin, and it appears that the Kronan had more cabins for officers than the Vasa, therefore representative of this development of warship cabin arrangements.

The sculptures within the great cabin and the stern gallery of the Vasa fulfilled no structural function. Not even the console heads, which would have given the impression of being roof beam supporting corbels, were not structurally functional, and very few of the exterior sculptures performed any structural role. Their function was therefore decorative with the added possibility of symbolic meaning. The interior sculptures represent several artistic influences typical in the late Renaissance and early Baroque, drawing on images from ancient Rome and the Italian Renaissance, and having a Northern European perspective with apparent exchanges between, for example, the Netherlands and Germany. The use of herm pilasters in this period is also seen in furniture, and the use of tall pilasters as doorposts reflects the similar use of pilaster columns and decorative columns from ancient Roman architecture.

Analysis of the decorative sculpture of the Vasa interior archaeological remains has shown that the console heads represent three types of portrait groups and that the majority of the herm pilasters come in similar pairs. Twenty-six of the thirty-two herm pilasters can be identified as actually being thirteen pairs, pointing to a bilaterally symmetrical arrangement. Whereas all the examples given of church altarpiece herm pilasters represent females, the herm pilasters in the German Church, Stockholm are mainly in a sequence of male, female, male, female. The poor condition of the Vasa herm pilasters makes it hard to identify them as being male or female, although at least some are identifiable as male and some as female. The existence of both male and female herm pilasters points to a similar arrangement of alternation in the Vasa great cabin as was in the German Church. In addition, the console heads in the German Church contain examples of all three console head types, human, lion and grotesque, even if the majority are of human type. There is no evidence to suggest that wooden panelling with herm pilasters and console heads, rather like a stateroom, was typical in a ship context however. Maybe if the use of such elaborate woodwork had been normal in a great cabin, more pictorial documentation would exist. The evidence of the archaeological remains in storage along with the design of the great cabin and stern gallery structures shows that the designers where attempting to create a palace stateroom on a ship, rather than a ships cabin. No expense would have been spared, with the great cabin purposely built to hold panelling with herm pilasters and console heads attached, and designed in such a way that there were no visible nail fixtures.
The reconstruction process has pointed to the original positions of the two herm pilaster doorposts in the stern gallery, the two herm pilaster doorposts and cartouche lintel at the entrance to the great cabin from the helmsman’s cabin and the two console heads around the mast trunk which would have been attached to the panelling in the great cabin. Also proposed is the position of the two remaining herm pilaster doorposts inside the great cabin, and the position of four herm pilasters and three console heads on one section of panelling from the starboard side of the great cabin. The latter was done by matching the nail hole measurements on the sculptures and appropriate panel with what is known about the drop locations of the sculptures. The panel example makes use of the only current intact piece of panelling to come from the great cabin.

The sculptures on the Vasa had more meaning than just expensive, colourful decoration. There is a use of a symbolic form of language paralleling that used within the churches of Europe and the imagery of ancient Roman, Greek and Egyptian cultures, all of the latter dependant on representations of the ship in one form or another. The combined grouping of Vasa interior sculptures representing humans and animals from both land and sea would have given the impression of the King holding court over his subjects no matter where in the world the warship was, stating the King’s sovereignty even over the sea. In this context, the sculptures relate to the giving of ideas, as well as the projection of values and opinions, not unlike the function of a modern billboard or television advertisement. The use of such symbolic decorative function within the Vasa points us in the direction of another function – that the great cabin was intended as a mobile royal court for the King when on board, a place where it was possible to hold council and entertain the upper classes or show off the wealth of the country to foreign nobility and diplomats. It was meant to be a home from home in times of war, giving the sovereign power, status and the ability to relax in relative comfort. That it was decorated as a stateroom rather than a cabin would have made it different to other warships of the period.
Appendix 1 Catalogue items

**Magazine storage locations - great cabin archaeological remains**

‘A1’ is the palette number, and the next numbers are the rows across starting from left to right.

### Console heads

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Figure 122, console heads magazine locations

### Herm pilasters

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Figure 123, herm pilasters magazine locations
Archaeological remains location in the storage vault

Figure 124, Floor plan of the storage vault

Key:
A1 = console heads; A2 - A4 = herm pilasters; A5 = wide pilasters & 2 x lions; A6 = 2 x doorposts; A7 = door lintel; A8 = 3 x doorposts; A9 = doorpost, herm pilaster; A10 = 2 x wide herm pilasters

The crown-decked cartouche lintel held by two tritons is on display in the museum, opposite the stern of the ship.
Herm pilaster information

| HP 6 - 04522 | HP 7 - 04532 |
| HP 31 - 00908 | HP 2 - 04450 |
| HP 9 – 04734 | HP 12 - 04836 |
| HP 11 – 04835 | HP 16 - 05484 |
| HP 8 – 04598 | HP 10 - 04798 |
| HP 30 - 07065 | HP 25 - 06581 |
| HP 1 – 04412 | HP20 - 05511 |
| HP 22 – 05612 | HP 26 - 06582 |
| HP 18 – 05509 | HP 3 - 04457 |
| HP 27 – 06583 | HP 21 - 05592 |
| HP 14 – 05482 | HP 15 - 05483 |
| HP 5 – 04513 | HP 4 - 04458 |
| HP 24 – 06580 | HP 17 - 05508 |

Figure 125, 13 x Herm pilasters with their similar pairs

| HP 28 - 06882 |
| HP 23 - 05613 |
| HP 13 - 05292 |
| HP 19 - 05510 |
| HP 29 - 06884 |

Figure 126, 5 x Single herm pilasters, not including 05591 (the misplaced herm pilaster).

| 06859 |
| 04895 |

Figure 127, 2 x Herm pilasters end sections.

| HP 20 - 05511 |
| HP 11 - 04835 |
| HP 1 - 04412 |

Figure 128, 3 x Missing herm pilasters end sections
**Console head information**

Three Console head groups: ‘Human,’ Lion’ and ‘Grotesque.’ Some of these console heads are not so easy to identify and some could belong to a different group.

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Figure 129, 12 Human console heads

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Figure 130, 8 Lion console heads & 8 grotesque console heads
Forms for recording archaeological remains

Figure 131, Example of archaeological recording forms, the first form showing the recording of console head catalogue no. 07084, possibly with a male face. The last form shows the recording of herm pilaster catalogue no. 06882 with the left arm coming across the chest and hand holding an object, and right arm coming down to the hip. The middle section of the herm is decorated with foliage, and the base is slanted up to the left. The decoration is very badly worn.
Bibliography


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Lecture notes.


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