

Bevel Cut
November 2016
Architectural Woodcarving

I was in Stockholm this past June, and spent a day at the Vasa Museum which displays the only almost-fully-intact 17th century ship that has ever been salvaged, the 64-gun warship Vasa.

Vasa is a Swedish warship built between 1626 and 1628. The ship turned out to be top-heavy and foundered when a wind gust arrived after sailing only 1,400 yards into her maiden voyage on 10 August 1628. She fell into obscurity after most of her valuable bronze cannons were salvaged in the 17th century until she was located again in the late 1950s in a busy shipping lane just outside the Stockholm harbor. Salvaged with a largely intact hull in 1961 (333 years on the bottom), she was housed in a temporary museum and was treated with polyethylene glycol while the wood dried out for 27 years. In 1988 the ship was moved to the permanent museum in Stockholm.



*One view of the ship shows size relationship next to human observer.
The carved lion at the front of the boat measures approximately 9 feet
head to tail*

The ship was built on the orders of the King of Sweden Gustavus Adolphus as part of the military expansion he initiated in a war with Poland-Lithuania (1621–1629). She was armed primarily with bronze cannons cast in Stockholm specifically for the ship.

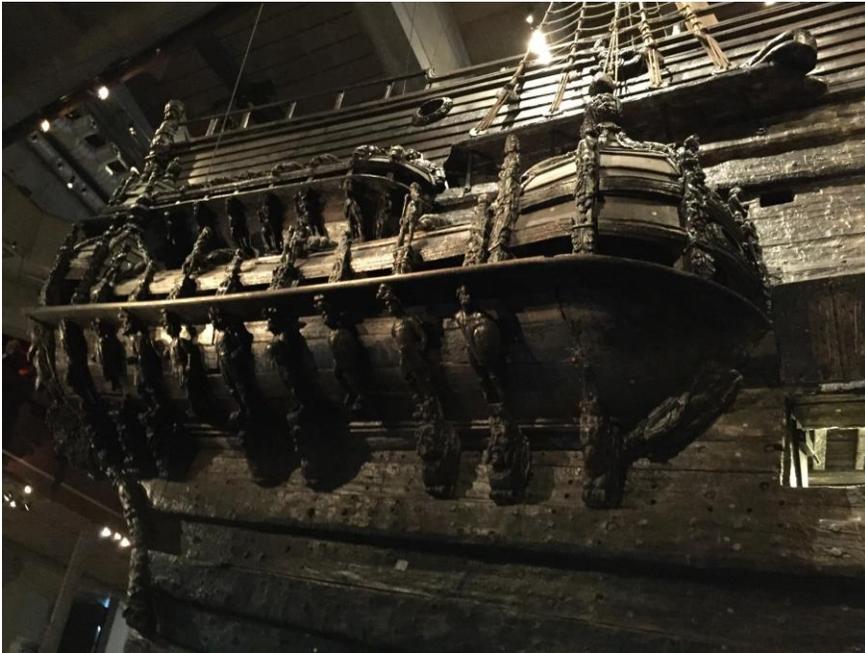


Model of ship with sails; actual Vasa is in background

Richly decorated with woodcarvings and bright paint (see photos) as a symbol of the king's ambitions for Sweden and himself, upon completion she was one of the most powerfully armed and glamorously ornamented vessels in the world. The hundreds of wood carvings on the boat (hence the EMGW connection) were intended to glorify the authority, wisdom, and prowess of the Swedish monarch and to intimidate the enemy (or at least their woodcarvers).



Note the extensive woodcarving on the left on the actual size ship. This is typical of the details that were carved all over the boat, with themes from mythology. The photo of the Vasa model on the right shows the same scene along with the multiple bright colors that were used to impress friend and foe alike.



Detail of the boats architecture also shows how almost every possible surface included a wood carving.



Side view of ship's bow showing multiple woodcarvings, including 9 foot lion.

They didn't have youtube back in 1628, but you can catch an interesting Vasa-related woodcarving video here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fbxqiodyTl>

And of course, see it all live at our November 12 meeting.