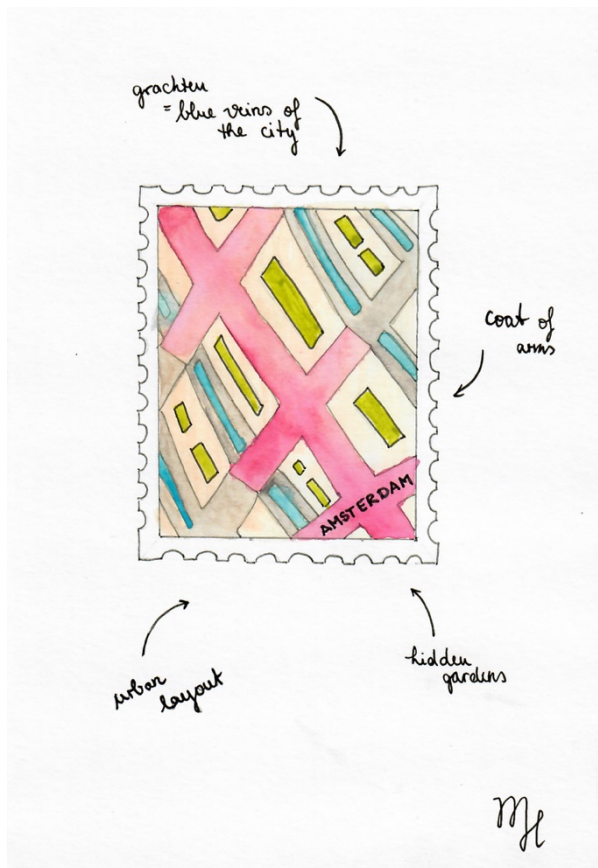


“Postmarked Layers of Resilience”

During my travels, I carry a personal ritual with me. From every destination I visit, I send a postcard to my grandmother. It is my way of staying connected to soften the distance and offer her a small window into each place I explore. I wanted to transform this gesture into the creative project for my OWHC journey. The answer: postage stamps. Unlike postcards, stamps are miniature narratives. Compact symbols deeply tied to local identity. They can encapsulate history, culture, and memory in a square destined to travel across borders.

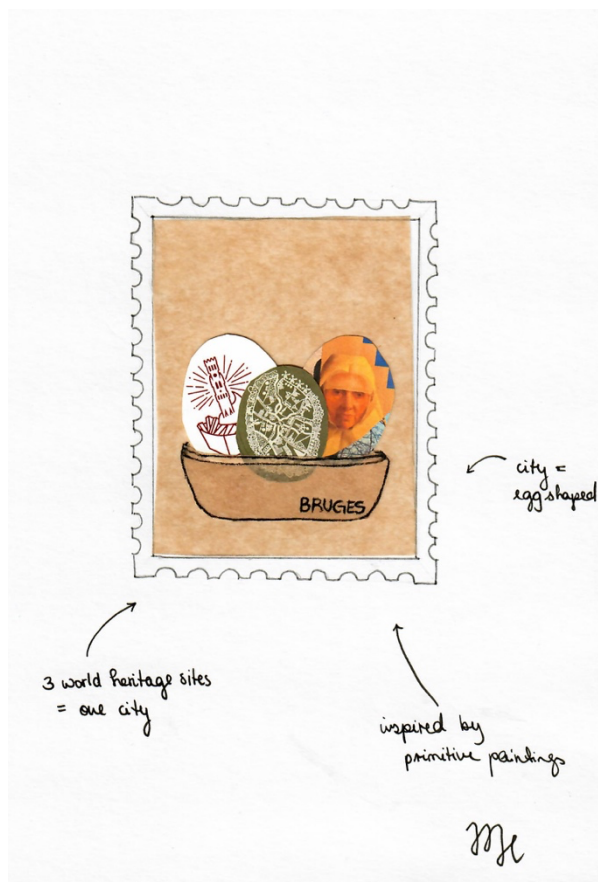
I created a custom visual stamp for each of the four World Heritage Cities I visited: Amsterdam, Bruges, Le Havre, and Edinburgh. Each design reflects the city’s layers of resilience. How these places have adapted, transformed, and negotiated the pressures of time, environment, and community needs. While visiting, I kept in mind the principles of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach, which sees cities not as static heritage objects but as dynamic living systems. Guided by this perspective, each stamp captures a blend of characteristics tied to the Outstanding Universal Value of its World Heritage city. This includes urban street patterns, architectural forms, historical layers, cultural practices, inspirations from conversations with the managing heritage experts, and my own on-the-ground impressions.

The result is a series of four stamps (two in watercolor and two in mixed media). Each functions as a small, symbolic cross-section of its city’s evolving urban landscape. Through them, I aim not only to highlight local identity but also to shift how we look at World Heritage Cities. Seeing them as layered, resilient, lived-in places rather than postcard-perfect scenes.



“Of Waterlines and Crossroads”

For Amsterdam, I drew inspiration from the urban maps displayed in the Grachtenmuseum, which vividly trace the city’s expansion. When learning about the coat of arms, I knew I wanted to weave it into the design. Overlaying its iconic red crosses onto the street layout to reflect how history is embedded in the urban fabric. What struck me most, beyond the beautiful views of the grachten from both the street and the water, were the city’s hidden green oases. These private gardens and inner courtyards remain mostly invisible from the street. Yet, they clearly reveal themselves on maps, showing the quieter but also important influence on the lived urban landscape. The canals flowing through the city like veins complete the layered system. The stamp brings these elements together. Water lines, street lines, and historic lines are being woven together into the history of the city.



“Fragiles Cargo”

The stamp grew out of a conversation with the city’s heritage managers, who explained the intricacies of Bruges as a home for three World Heritage sites: the Belfry, the historic centre, and the Beguinage. I wanted to create a stamp that holds all three, reflecting how they coexist within the city. I was told, half-jokingly, that the city centre of Bruges is shaped like an egg. This anecdote lingered with me. Inspired by the primitive paintings and using mixed media from small trinkets I collected throughout my stay, I created three egg-shaped forms, each representing one World Heritage site. Placed together in a trading vessel, they reference Bruges’ history as a mercantile hub, where people, goods, and ideas constantly circulated. The city’s identity seems to cradle the heritage as carefully as fragile objects over the water.

“Layers of Resilience”

Le Havre was a major inspiration for the overall theme of the creative output, as it embodies the concept “layers of resilience”. The city struck me as a living testament to reconstruction and creativity, shaped by its devastating war history. I wanted to create a stamp that holds these layers, reflecting how past and present coexist within the city. Wandering through the city, I was struck by the contrast between the precise lines of Auguste Perret’s architecture and the sweeping curves of Niemeyer’s Volcano, alongside the colourful remnants of the annual public art display „Un été au Havre“. The vibrant hues of these modern structures contrast with the muted tones of the postwar architecture, creating a dynamic interplay.



„A Close View“

The stamp is based on my fascination with the Old Town of Edinburgh, where the narrow closes weave through the medieval streets, offering brief reprieves from the bustle of the main roads while also providing striking view lines. I wanted to capture a perspective that reflects the city’s intricate layers rather than a strictly realistic view.

Using paper cutouts of iconic elements of the city, I explore its inherent contrasts: the orderly planning of the New Town alongside the dense fabric of the Old Town, landmarks such as the Edinburgh Castle or Carlton Hill, nods to Edinburgh’s title as the „Athens of the North“, and Arthur’s Seat rising above the city.

