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[QUICK THREAD: AMSTERDAM'S XXX]

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Most European cities date back to the Middle Ages if not Antiquity, and have an imperial coat of arms. This one's Amsterdam's. What you see in the middle column are not 3 letters but 3 crosses, Saint Andrew's Crosses or saltiers to be precise.



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The reason St. Andrew's Cross looks like that is because the saint was martyred on an X-shaped cross, instead of the more familiar + kind. He was one of the apostles of early Christianity and was crucified by the Romans for heresy.



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The reason this particular cross features on the city's coat of arms is because the apostle in question was a fisherman. And Amsterdam was founded as a fishing village back in 1505. St. Andrew is the most natural patron saint of fishermen around the world.

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Being the official municipal herald, this coat of arms appears all over Amsterdam. Take the city hall building (officially, the Stoper), for instance.



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Or this heritage building, certainly older than 1947 as it didn't include the motto (Heldhaftig, Vastberaden, Barmhartig). The motto was added only in 1947 by Queen Wilhelmina to honor the bravery and compassion shown by the city during the General Strike of 1941.



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Or the façade of this downtown university building.



7/11
Or the many terrible-quality umbrellas sold in the streets as souvenir.



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Or Amsterdam's official flag (yes, the city has a flag of its own that goes back centuries!). In this case, though, only the saltiers show up and not the whole coat of arms. The flag itself represents the red and black escutcheon.



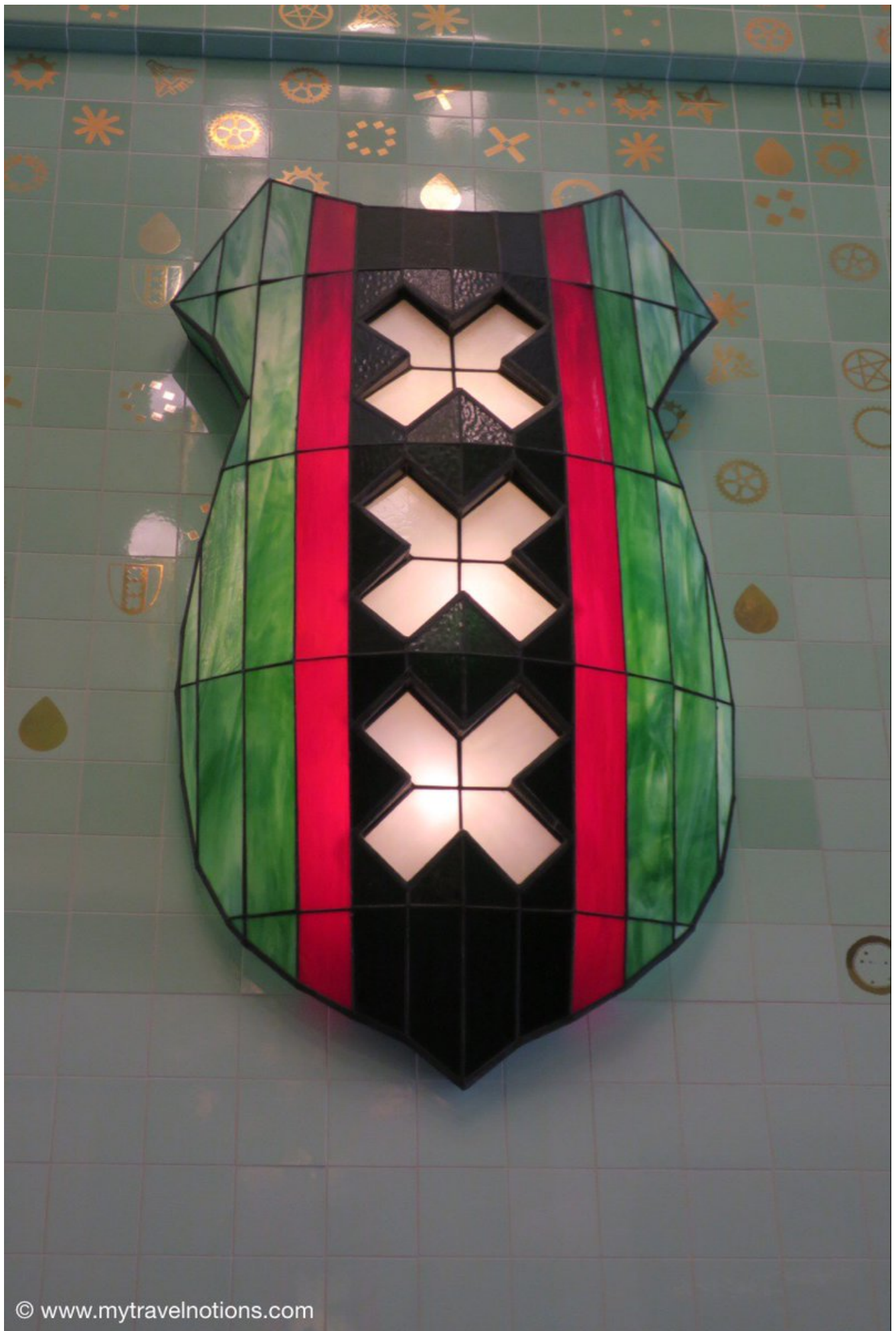
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Or the side of those house boats on city canals. Here too, it's just the escutcheon (shield) rather than the entire coat of arms.



10/11

Or this illuminated glass shield on an artwork titled Amsterdam Oersoep installed in a newly renovated passageway in Amsterdam.



11/11

Of course, it's only a coincidence that the 3 saltiers look identical to triple-X, a modern shorthand for red light district. It's also a coincidence that they appear on city bollards (called Amsterdammertjes in Dutch). And it's also a coincidence that bollards look like...

