The United Arab Emirates has embraced the creative city concept as a path to the future. Unlike other cities seeking to reinvent themselves as creative capitals, cities in the UAE present a blank slate on which to inscribe their particular construction of a creative economy and ethos. The spaces meant to house the creative city must be built from scratch; no reclamation of nineteenth century industrial warehouses or quaint Medieval town squares is possible in the UAE. And no gritty urban tradition of graffiti, such as that which has marked and continues to mark urban capitals from New York to London and Berlin, exists to influence a new, gentrified, form of street art. Instead, to the extent that the United Arab Emirates wish to embrace street art as a marker of contemporary creativity this urban art form must be imported, yet there is a strong desire to use street art in ways that reify Emirati identity. Throughout the UAE but most noticeably in Dubai, a style that I term heritage street art has become popular. This type of street art is present in other Gulf countries, but the work in Dubai stands out for its quality and for
some of the chosen locations for the work, as well as for the context of its creation. In 2016, sixteen large murals were painted on buildings on 2nd December Street in the Satwa neighborhood of Dubai. The murals all feature subjects related to the culture and heritage of the UAE and the project was closely managed by Brand Dubai and Dubai Municipality. This paper uses the example of the 2nd December Street project as a lens through which to examine the use of street as a means of constructing cultural identity and celebrating national heritage in the UAE.

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Dr. Sabrina DeTurk is currently Assistant Professor of Art History and Assistant Dean in the College of Arts and Creative Enterprises at Zayed University in Dubai. Dr. DeTurk's research interests center on art as a form of social commentary and on cross-cultural currents between the art of the Middle East and the West from the Renaissance to present day. She has two books in progress: Street Art in the Middle East: Place, Politics and Visual Style, to be published with I.B. Tauris and Images of Women in Renaissance Venice: Social, Political and Economic Contexts, to be published with Amsterdam University Press. She has previous publications in various journals, including Afterimage and Art in the Public Sphere and has presented papers at numerous international conferences. From 2008 to 2014, Dr. DeTurk served as Associate Dean and Executive Director of Graduate Arts and Sciences at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, PA. She previously held faculty and administrative positions at La Salle University (Philadelphia) and Salem College (Winston-Salem, NC). Dr. DeTurk received her BA in the History of Art from Wellesley College (Wellesley, MA) and her MA and PhD in the History of Art from Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, PA).