



---

**PARTNER CONTENT**

# **For Kensington, By Kensington: Mural Arts' We Here Spotlights Community Grit and Pride**



---

PARTNER CONTENT



Updated  
September 16, 2024

---

For award-winning ceramicist, activist, educator, and Kensington native Roberto Lugo, it took leaving his neighborhood to truly understand the place where he started out.

“Growing up in Kensington went from being something I was ashamed of to something that I’m really proud of,” Lugo says. “I see people really making an effort to bring art, culture, and peace to this part of Philadelphia, and I want to be a part of that.”

Community pride, strength, and resilience are at the heart of *We Here*, a public art project from Lugo and Mural Arts Philadelphia, culminating this fall in Kensington with a series of celebratory events, including tours, a children’s book launch, and a sculpture party and forum on Saturday, October 19, all free and open to the public.



We Here Garden Party, July 27, 2024. Photo by Steve Weinik.

After two years of input from Kensington residents via clay and pattern-making workshops, Lugo has created and installed three monumental outdoor sculptures that reflect the neighborhood's rich cultural tapestry. Each 12-foot vessel—installed with support from community partners Taller Puertorriqueño, Kensington Corridor Trust, and the Free Church of St. John—features patterns designed in those workshops, as well as a cutout entryway that allows visitors to step inside and see themselves in the artwork.

Local feedback has been a key aspect of *We Here* from the very start, thanks to a dedicated 11-person community advisory committee that has informed the project through every phase. The committee is made up of Kensington residents who are highly invested in their neighborhood and passionate about changing public perception of their home, given the swell of negative media attention that has

When Katelyn Stoler learned about the *We Here* project, she joined the community advisory committee. “I was excited to get involved, to put Kensington in the news for something positive and to draw attention to the neighborhood,” Stoler says.

“One of my hopes for this project is that years later, our stories are remembered,” says Daisy Cardona, another committee member.

In addition to the final *We Here* sculptures, Lugo has also teamed up with acclaimed author Frank Berrios to create a children’s book titled *We Here: What Kind of Artist Will You Be?*, illustrated by Meghan Galloway-Edgar. Inspired by Lugo’s artistic journey, English and Spanish editions of the book will be distributed for free to Kensington families in the hopes of inspiring the next generation of neighborhood artists.



We Here Installation at the KCT Garden, July 24, 2024. Photo by Steve Weinik.

“The most exciting part is for [the project] to come from this space and to be designed by people in this space, and at the end of the day, for them to be able to enjoy it,” says Lugo. “The beginning of the story is when it’s created.”

The Greater Philadelphia region is invited to see Kensington through the eyes of the people who live there. Mural Arts Philadelphia, with the support of project partners and funders, will host a series of free and lively events in September and October, including neighborhood tours of all three culminating sculptures, readings from the children’s book, and a massive “sculpture party” on Saturday, October 19, featuring clay activities, a poetry slam and panel discussion, free refreshments, and much more.

Visit [muralarts.org/we-here](https://muralarts.org/we-here) to learn more about the project and these exciting events.

---

*Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), Katie Adams Schaeffer and Tony Schaeffer, Julia and David Fleischner, City of Philadelphia, and an anonymous donor. This project is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.*

---



Published by INQStudio  
September 16, 2024

---

This content was produced by The Philadelphia Inquirer's INQStudio in collaboration with the advertiser. The news and editorial departments of The Philadelphia Inquirer had no role in its production or display.

---

## ABOUT US

---

- [About The Inquirer](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Licensing & Permissions](#)
- [Photo Reprints](#)
- [Newspapers in Education](#)
- [Jobs & Internships](#)
- [Inquirer Live](#)
- [Acel Moore Workshops](#)
- [Newsroom Staff](#)

## MARKETPLACE

---

- [Inquirer Store](#)
- [Job Listings](#)

## NEWS & INFO

---

- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Sports Betting](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Special Reports](#)

## E-EDITIONS

---

- [The Inquirer](#)
- [The Daily News](#)

---

[Legal Notices](#)

[Gift Subscriptions](#)

**MOBILE APPS**

---

[Apple iOS](#)

[Google Android](#)



©2024 The Philadelphia Inquirer, LLC

[Terms of Use](#) / [Privacy Policy](#) / [Cancellation Policy](#) / [California Notice](#)

[California residents do not sell my data request](#)