

# The Philadelphia Inquirer

## Street cred, in paint and ceramics

by Edith Newhall, Updated: December 1, 2019

Since exhibiting together in 2013, painter Mat Tomezsko and ceramic artist Roberto Lugo have maintained a collaborative partnership that draws on their shared ties to Philadelphia (both were raised here), their community engagement, and their use of found materials in their works. That synergy is on full display in their two-person show, “Wynorrific Times,” at Wexler Gallery.

Philadelphians may be acquainted with Tomezsko’s public art. His mural, *Flowering Axes*, is on the wall of the Fifth Street tunnel linking Old City and Northern Liberties. A temporary installation, *14 Movements: A Symphony in Color and Words*, took over the South Broad Street median during the 2016 Democratic Convention.

His recent paintings have the same street cred, but they’re much smaller.



KENEK PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WEXLER GALLERY  
Mat Tomezsko's painting, "Cheeseburger" (2019) at Wexler Gallery

“Price” is a series of works on canvas, each featuring a central cross shape collaged with cut-out supermarket ads and set against a background of black asphalt and coal. They’re formal abstract compositions that combine delicacy and meticulousness with the grittiness

of the street. The cross shapes in *Cheeseburger* and some other paintings from the series include acrylic paint and confetti.

Lugo's ceramic vessels are well-known in Philadelphia and elsewhere, and his recent hand-painted porcelain vessels here continue to pay homage to underrepresented figures in art history.



**KENEK PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY WEXLER GALLERY**  
Roberto Lugo's ceramic vessel, "A Century of Shrine" (2019), at Wexler Gallery

One startling departure is *Self Portrait as Street* (2019), Lugo's life-size, freestanding sculpture of himself. It's composed from ceramic, concrete, gun parts, chain, clothes, and latex paint, making the artist a man of the streets in every sense.

*Through Jan. 5 at Wexler Gallery, 201 N. 3rd St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays. 215-923-7030 or [wexlergallery.com](http://wexlergallery.com). Through January 5.*