Olde Kensington is a close-knit community with a thriving arts and culture scene (watch out, Fishtown). On every street you will encounter anything from an art recycling center to a monstrous exhibition hub. Want to brush up on your photography skills? Grab a cup of premium-sourced coffee? Network at a trendy gallery event? In Olde Kensington, you can do it all and within close walking-distance. This list features five creative places in the neighborhood to appease your artistic needs.
The Resource Exchange (re). 1701 N. 2nd St.

The Resource Exchange (re) is a nonprofit thrift store for artists. Revolutionary to Philadelphia, re accepts used art material from film and theater sets, design organizations, schools, and art students that would normally be dumped into landfills. The current landfill savings from re is 2,671,165 pounds. Because re accepts items from anyone, its inventory is extensive. It includes everything from apartment furniture, to fabrics, to used paint tubes. Started in 2009, founder Karyn Gerred, noticed the city sorely needed this resource. “While working in film and theater, I saw all the stuff that was dumped and thrown out,” Gerred said. “I saw creative use places every where and I used to do the same thing with my work. I wanted to find a solution to save the stuff, so it was a combination of this.” Community engagement is evident as according to Gerred, a local high school is doing a play using only reused materials from re. “That’s exactly what I was looking to do with this,” she said. “Philadelphia is trying to become a sustainable city, but art isn’t in the dialogue,” Gerred said. “It’s a missing piece. People don’t realize how much art plays a role in recycling and sustainability.” re is a one-stop shop for all creative arts needs, including DIY projects and furniture shopping.
baahdeebahdu. **1522 N. American St.**

baahdeebahdu is a gallery and working studio that features light installations and interior decorating. The inside of the building is adorned with intricate and captivating light fixtures designed by co-owner Warren Muller that are both functional and attractive. The gallery also features interior decor and furniture designed by the owner, RJ Thornburg. baahdeebahdu’s clientele ranges from residents to restaurants who all fall in love with the “industrial chic” aesthetic. “We also feature local artists, however their work must complement and fit the aesthetic that’s already here,” Thornburg said. “Right now, we are developing something with Inliquid in featuring an artist.” Thornburg’s studio space extends to canines: “It’s ‘a petting gallery!”’ RJ remarked. The gallery’s quirky name came from his beloved dog, and he has three adorable Pomeranians that lounge around the gallery. So if you’re in the mood for truly unique apartment shopping and would love an eager greeting from dogs Tito and Bella, stop by baahdeebahdu.

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**The Icebox Project Space at Crane Arts. 1400 N. American St.**

The **Icebox Project Space at Crane Arts** is an exhibition space where both emerging and established artists can work with freedom and display their creations in a large, open structure. Icebox is experimental and strays far from following the cookie-cutter curation mold. It's perfect for artists of all industries who need the creative space to best perform and fun for art-lovers who want a different and challenging experience when visiting an exhibition. Icebox's other main feature is its private or shared art studios available for rent in the upper floors and basement of the Crane Arts building. The building also houses a variety of art projects including Philadelphia Photo Arts Center, Inliquid Art & Design, Second State Press, Indigo Arts, and Marafi Arts. Fully immersed in all the arts, Crane Arts also hosts Philadelphia Fashion Week each year and will have an exhibition in late spring featuring MFA students from University of Delaware, Tyler School of Art, and University of Pennsylvania. Interested in going to an exhibition at Icebox Project Space at Crane Arts? There’s one every month, and the next upcoming event is “Dinner Party: Installation and Publication” on Thursday Feb. 12. More information can be found on the [website](#).
ReAnimator Coffee. 310 W. Master St.

ReAnimator Coffee is a place to savor a cup of deliciously smooth and naturally sweet coffee while viewing the coffee-roasting process that takes place behind the counter. “We have an open concept so people can see the production being done,” said Matt Scattoline, director of coffee. “People who are into coffee can come in here and see the process. We showcase it.” The coffee beans are sourced from all over the world, including Central America, Africa and Indonesia; whatever is in season according to Scattoline, because coffee beans are treated like produce. “We want to act as a resource for the community,” he said. “We want to do education and training, because the vision of ReAnimation is to sort of demystify coffee. What we do is in the hopes of educating people in a way so that people feel empowered to be part of the experience. If people are interested that’s great, but if they just want to come in for a cup of coffee that’s fine too. We want to be hospitable.” If you hate pretentious coffee shops, but would like to start a dialogue with educated workers, then ReAnimator deserves a visit.

Project Basho. 1305 Germantown Ave.

Project Basho is a place for amateur photographers to explore and enhance their skills. Project Basho offers weekend and weekday night classes in-house and online. Founder Tsuyoshi Ito’s mission is to simply teach photography. “It’s about continuing education, either for a job, as a creative outlet, or making it a hobby,” Ito said. “Classes range from teaching the basics like how to use a DSLR camera to learning composition.” Ito’s goal is to provide long-term education. “I want to have classes like once a month for six months to build a body of work for the students,” he said. “Some people think they can learn everything in one or two classes, but the bottom line is, it takes time.” Ito and his team are involved in all aspects of photography education. “Basho means “place” in Japanese, so it’s a place for photographers,” he said. “We are more committed in a way; a small staff, but dedicated people. I take some of the students on destination trips like to Japan and this year we’re going to Italy. We’re using photography as a tool for exploring both the outside world and inner world, as in who you are.” For aspiring photographers who appreciate learning from a committed staff, Project Basho’s classes or private lessons have sign-ups on the website.

— Text and images by Lauren Brown and Caitlin O’Connell.