

Pick up blacksmithing in New York City

Forging iron is a woman's business at female-run studio She-Weld, an independent metalwork outfit in Brooklyn

Most would consider the labor-intensive art of blacksmithing a male-dominated craft, but Marsha Trattner (pictured) – blacksmith, artist and founder of blacksmith studio She-Weld – is smashing this stereotype. At her nondescript workshop in Brooklyn's Red Hook neighborhood, the spirited 55-year-old works a blowtorch with ease.

Trattner conducts various lessons at She-Weld, from weekend knife-making workshops to semester-long blacksmithing courses. "Recently, there has been a resurgence in interest in blacksmithing, as well as handmade objects in general," says Trattner, whose love affair with metalwork goes back decades.

After graduating with an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design in 1987, she found a job as an assistant at the Sculpture Center in New York, where she crafted her first metal objects. She later came across a group of blacksmiths behind a squat in East Village, who invited her to work at their forge. There, she learned the fundamentals of blacksmithing and forging metals entirely by hand.

"That forge had a very basic setup and the environment was pretty nuts, but I was hungry to learn," Trattner shares. "In fact, I remember getting on the subway back home to Brooklyn, and despite already washing up, women would [take pity on me and] offer me sandwiches on the train!" This was followed by a stint working under New York blacksmith Ralph Causarano, who came from a long line of Italian metal workers.

With a wealth of experience under her belt, Trattner decided to open She-Weld in Brooklyn in 1994. "At the time, there were not a lot of places where women blacksmiths could feel comfortable or welcome working or learning, so She-Weld was a kind of response to that," she reveals.

Today, her classes are split evenly between both genders and according to Trattner, the response "has been amazing".

"I see women with a whole range of backgrounds, ages and interests coming here to learn," she enthuses. **she-weld.com**
– Delle Chan



Out of the box

Looking for a creative community? Here are three places offering artist residencies, studios and office spaces for the artistically inclined

Ubud

Set against lush paddy fields, **Air Artist Inn Residency** is a multidisciplinary artist residency and homestay experience offering airy living and working spaces. There are five stylish bedrooms, a two-bedroom apartment, and a 280m² studio. **airubud.com**

Chiang Mai

Creative community **Artist Residency Thailand** offers guidance, mentorship and networking opportunities. There are three residency programs – Engagement, Enhancement and Lotus – for guests with different levels of experience. All residencies come with accommodation. **artistresidencythailand.com**

Melbourne

Abbotsford Convent is a multi-arts precinct set on the grounds of a former convent. The tranquil venue offers studio and office spaces ranging from 10 to 120m² – where more than 100 artists, organizations and wellbeing practitioners are based. **abbotsfordconvent.com.au**