No-boys clubs

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Nearly a century after women’s suffragists rallied in the streets, rendezvoused in secret, and won the right to vote, women-only clubs are giving would-be “he-man woman haters” a run for their money.

Combining modern design, luxury, and convenience with women’s growing professional and financial power, a new generation of entrepreneurs and career women are once again tapping into the radical, and often political, act of taking up space in the world—only this time, they’re sharing space with high-speed internet, makeup on demand, and plush pink sofas.

The WW Club by Phoebe Lovatt

The Wing, co-founded by Audrey Gelman and Lauren Kassan, is an impeccably curated, no-boys-allowed social club that opened this month. In the short time it’s been in flight, The Wing has hosted a phone bank for Hillary Clinton and a high-profile sleepover with a guest list including Lena Dunham, Glossier founder Emily Weiss, model/activist Hari Nef, J. Crew’s Jenna Lyons, and rapper Remy Ma, as well as countless doyennes of fashion, media and tech.

The Wing’s goal is to function as a “homebase for women on their way”; a hub for women to convene, collaborate, and conference call—but also to shower, get a blowout, rest, refuel, read, drink, primp, pump (yes, there’s an on-site lactation room), and, according to The Wing’s website, “even stage a small coup.” It wouldn’t be the first women’s club to shake things up—in fact, it’s located in the Ladies’ Mile Historic District, home to many of New York’s earliest women’s clubs. By the 1930s there were over 600 women’s clubs in New York City and more than 5,000 around the country, according to historian Alexis Coe.

Today, these ladies-only clubs and co-working spaces are having a renaissance. HeraHub, a networking-based workspace in a spa like setting with four locations across the country (from San Diego to DC), has more than 400 active members. And in Los Angeles, Paper Dolls and One Roof Women (which has a second location in Melbourne) are reinventing traditional networking with amenities such as yoga and
meditation, in addition to their beautifully designed, art-filled conference rooms. Create + Cultivate, which describes itself as a movement, pop-up, and conference, has taken place in Brooklyn, Montauk, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Dallas, Palm Springs and Portland.

London-born freelance journalist Phoebe Lovatt is the founder of The WW Club, a digital platform and roving salon designed to connect, inspire and support women in creative fields around the world. In 2012, Lovatt relocated from London to Los Angeles, leaving behind a tightknit community of creative women. “Work went well when I moved to LA, but I still began to feel that my professional isolation—I was living and working alone—was really hindering my career development, and general well-being,” she says.

So, in January of 2015, The WW Club opened its doors to the first pop co-work space in Los Angeles, and self-published The Handbook For Women Who Do Creative Work, a comprehensive career bible featuring “advice from myself, friends and acquaintances who’d followed really interesting, self-made paths.”

Since its launch, The WW Club has hosted popular panel discussions, mentor meetings, dinners, freelancer work parties, and workshops in London, Paris, New York City, Los Angeles, and Taipei. Membership is just $9 per month, and includes a coveted pink membership card, among other perks, such as exclusive content and members-only events.

“My mission is grounded in providing the practical tools women need to live autonomous, creatively fulfilled lives,” explains Lovatt. “Right now, I think a lot of young people look at successful creative people on social media and lifestyle blogs and think being self-employed/entrepreneurial is all about drinking almond milk cappuccinos and working off your Macbook on a marble table. You can't sustain a self-made career without knowing about budgeting, taxes, money flow, time management, handling clients, etc. My primary goal is to make this type of information as accessible and comprehensive (and beautifully presented!) as possible.”

In 2016, when more than 40% of household breadwinners in the US are women and the possibility of Madam President appears likely, some might argue that women no longer need a space for themselves, while others think it’s never been so necessary. “I think a lot of women can lack professional confidence and suffer from imposter syndrome. When we come together we're better able to overcome those types of limitations, which can hinder a career so much. There's strength in numbers,” says Lovatt.
For more, see Glass and Women, Next.

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