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## Why Was 1977 Such a Boom Year for Upstart New York Art Institutions? An Oral History, 40 Years Later

Four groundbreaking institutions celebrated their 40th birthdays this year. Those who were there from the beginning tell us what it was like.

**Sarah Cascone**, December 21, 2017

The year is 1977. Jimmy Carter is president, the first *Star Wars* movie has just been released, and New York's art world is experiencing unprecedented change.

It was this year that four very determined women founded four major art institutions—the Drawing Center, the New Museum, the Public Art Fund, and Studio in a School—in New York City. Each organization, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year, was born out its founders' frustration with the status quo and their desire to fill a void left by the traditional art establishment. All four institutions continue to thrive today.

To piece together an oral history of these influential organizations' early years, artnet News interviewed more than 10 figures from all four institutions and delved into the New Museum Digital Archive and its own oral history. The result is a snapshot of a moment in time when the art world was smaller, more experimental, and fully convinced of its ability to create lasting change.

### A Time for Experimentation—and Struggle



"Erika Rothenberg: *Have You Attacked America Today?*" (1989). (Photo courtesy of the New Museum.)

**Holtzman:** There was the show, "Have You Attacked America Today?" [It was] a small window show, in 1989, by Erika Rothenberg. And we were in that moment of controversy—not for the sake of controversy, but because there were things to say that some aspects of the world didn't want to hear....

During the Rothenberg piece, the window was smashed with a garbage can three times, I believe. That kind of vandalism was new—new to me, and I think it was new to Marcia.