

DOWNTOWN ON: SOHO

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Not So LONG AGO

In the early 1960s, SoHo contained a sea of empty, low-rent commercial lofts equipped with industrial elevators, loading docks and large, unobstructed spaces filled with natural light. In other words, SoHo was an artist's paradise. Although it was illegal at the time to live in buildings that were neither zoned nor equipped for residential use, young artists couldn't resist the ample workspaces. One by one, their presence began to gentrify a once industrial wasteland, turning it into a vibrant community that also attracted writers, musicians and activists. By 1975 the area contained over 80 galleries, and by 1980 it was the center of the New York art market.

—STACY SEILER

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