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In New York, Arts Trump Social Causes for Philanthropic Recognition

Arts-related giving and activity by New York's wealthy generate more media attention and carry more social cache than philanthropic efforts to fight poverty and disease, according to Crain's New York Business.

Large donations to institutions such as the Lincoln Center, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the New York City Ballet are well covered in the press, and serving on major arts boards can raise members' social standing and improve business ties, Crain's writes. By contrast, when the New York investment managers Fiona and Stanley Druckenmiller, who focus on medical and economic charities, ranked No. 1 on the latest Chronicle of Philanthropy list of top givers, "many in the city's nonprofit world wondered, 'Who?'"

Experts say the city's elite put great value on major arts institutions, and gifts to such organizations garner public attention because they are often landmarks frequented by residents and tourists, unlike new hospital wings or university buildings.