

Arts Giving Is Up, But Hold the Applause

By Joel Rose

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While the overall U.S. economy seems to be stuck in neutral, there are a few bright spots. One of them is charitable giving to the arts, which was up more than 5 percent last year.

But a new study cautions that much of that support serves audiences that are wealthier and whiter than the country as a whole.

... "Funding for arts and culture is primarily flowing to larger organizations," says Aaron Dorfman, who directs the NCRP, a watchdog group that monitors giving by foundations.

Dorfman says the majority of foundations giving to the arts goes to organizations with budgets of \$5 million dollars a year or more.

"Most of your museums, symphonies, opera houses — large established cultural institutions that are promoting the European cannon," he says. "The audiences for those institutions continue to be predominantly upper income and white. So what it means is that this funding is not really benefiting everyone in our society.

Dorfman doesn't begrudge the fundraising success big institutions like the Met, but he says you don't hear those kinds of success stories in this economy coming from arts groups operating in communities of color, or led by artists of color, for the most part.

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