In his interesting review of the Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition at Augustana, Steve Banks rightfully points out that this year's incarnation of the show is "unthemed" and thus more about "showcasing dynamic talent. " (See "Satisfying an Appetite for Charisma," *River Cities' Reader* Issue 575, April 5-11, 2006.)

Still it is helpful to keep an eye on the more general context. The ever-page-turning history of American art – beginning with the transitional French artist Marcel Duchamp. His cubistic "Nude Descending a Staircase" created an art-world sensation as the hallmark canvas at the pivotal New York Armory Show in 1913. Here America begins to realize its artistic emancipation from Europe.

In 1917, he recognizes that ordinary objects ("ready-made") offer an escape from the conventional aesthetic of art exhibits. So he submits a standard porcelain bathroom urinal (titled *Fountain*) to a juried New York show, signing it "R. Mutt." Naturally, it was rejected as a crass prank.

Duchamp's stated purpose in this iconoclastic exercise is to dramatize one fact. His *designating* a work to be "art" (as a jury does) rather than creating the art enables him (as artist) to "reduce the idea of aesthetic consideration to the choice of the mind." In designating, the artist authorizes himself as the jury. Duchamp wants art to move beyond the myopic scrutiny of accepted painting technique. To focus instead on art as visual language.

Art as a language is *alive* and is not about satisfying criteria. Rather it's about s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g the imagination. The Hirshhorn (Smithsonian) Museum views art not as beauty but clash. A living language is ever evolving ... retching forward. An oft-forgotten aspect of art criticism.

Daniel Tully
Davenport

Plant Vote a Strike Against Corporate Welfare

Thanks to the Silvis City Council, which voted against the enterprise zone, the *people* have won the first battle in the fight to keep a giant pork-processing plant out of their neighborhood. Of the many reasons that were addressed by more than 25 speakers at the meeting that preceded the voting, the major concern was corporate welfare.

This country has been in a period of change as we watch the middle class shrink, the poor get poorer, and the rich become exceedingly richer. There are many reasons why this is happening, but one major cause is local governments giving big tax breaks to huge corporations as an incentive to locate in their community with the idea it will create economic prosperity for their town. We have seen a TIF for Wal-Mart where taxpayers foot the bill while the wealthiest corporation in America just grins from ear to ear all the way to bank. Don't get me wrong: I am not against big business. In fact, large corporations have made America strong by providing good-paying jobs with benefits, and by giving some of their profits back to their communities in the form of grants for education, parks and trails, and other worthwhile causes. But there are

other big businesses that are not so nice.

I commend the Silvis city fathers for listening to the people, studying the pros and cons of having the world's largest hog processing plant in their community, and then boldly standing up for what's right.

Jerry Neff
Pleasant Valley, Iowa

Davenport Situation "Appalling"

As I read your "Words from the Editor" (see "Abuse of Taxpayers Reaching Critical Mass," *River Cities' Reader* Issue 575, April 5-11, 2006) from the United Kingdom, I wondered why the other mainstream media outlets have not seen your logic and insight. I am stationed "over the pond" for a couple of years, but my family still resides in Scott County.

The present situation in Davenport is appalling. Thank you for your efforts to bring awareness to the "smoky room negotiations" that seem to be routine in the city council. I always considered the Davenport government as somewhat crooked, but this latest deal flirts with bold-face corruption.

I have followed your stories in the *Reader*, notably the Isle of Capri "development," and the Botsko case. Both pieces demonstrate your well-developed and outstanding journalistic skills. Only if others in the business could research and write as well ... .

My wife was considering moving into Davenport, from the county, but this really eliminates that option. I will not have my tax dollars wasted on boondoggle projects that benefit some fat-cat developer or politician. If I were there, I would like to protest or picket city hall.

What will it take to turn the worm?

Keep up the good fight. Remember Gandhi's words: First they ignore you, next they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win.

K. Kozol
Solihull, United Kingdom

Omission

In the April 5 edition of the *Reader*, the art review "Satisfying an Appetite for Charisma" neglected to mention one of the Rock Island Fine Arts Exhibition's winners. Tom Sallak's watercolor *Generations* was awarded the Sally MacMillan Watercolor Award. The *Reader* regrets the omission.