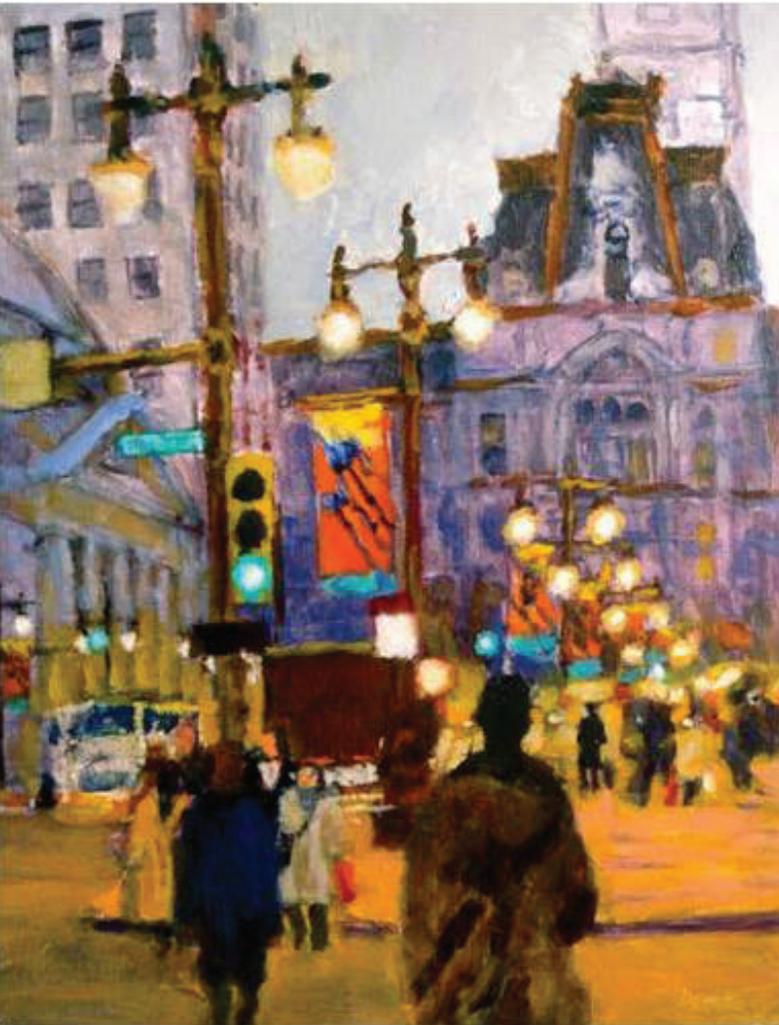


Confessions of a Center City Booster

Edwin Bronstein



Broad Street, December Dusk - oil on canvas

Philadelphia is a great town in which to live.

Center City, in particular, provides a rich backdrop in buildings, in the arts, and in cultural activity. Sure, I go to New York City at least a few times each year, and I love it. After all, it's only two hours away by bus, train, or car. But the sense of history here, given our relatively small size along with our great stock of buildings from over three centuries, makes Philadelphia one of the few cities in this country which – so I have been told by many visitors - feels European because of its fabric and its size. There are also its terrific (and ever-expanding) food and drink options. William Penn's original river-to-river plan works well.

I was one of the original six members of the Design Advocacy Group when we first met in Alan Greenberger's office at MGA Architects. I've tried to be an active member ever since. At DAG we try to keep our collective finger on proposed new buildings and projects so that we can get the best we can from new buildings and developments – after all we have a tradition to uphold.

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Fitler Square: Early Light (diptych) · oil on canvas

Right now it feels to me as though the city government is filled with smart dedicated people who feel as I do. But it still takes lots of vigilance on everyone's part to keep things moving in the right direction. I see Center City expanding ever westward to incorporate the Schuylkill River and University City. The office core from Market to Walnut Streets will soon cross the Schuylkill and extend from the Delaware to 38th Street.

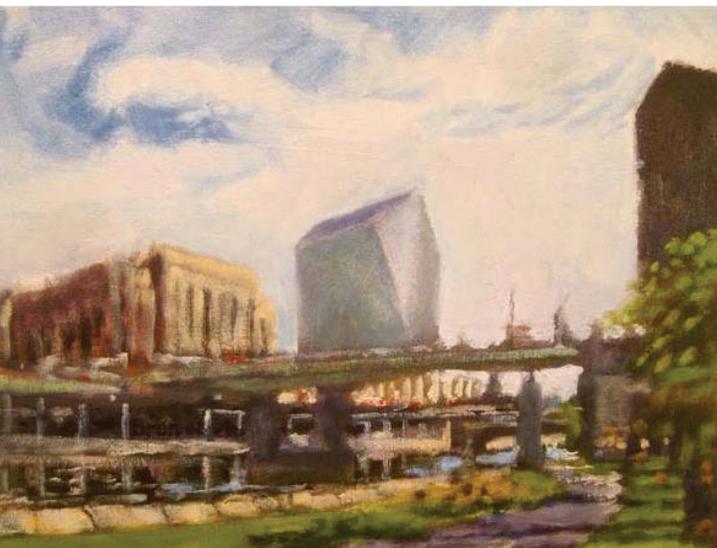
I see more and more young, educated people moving in and staking their claim here. (One note of continuing discomfort is the continuing lack of good public education for all.) Every day I see more bikes, which translates into fewer cars in Center City. Our local government, to its credit, continues to respond by expanding the bike lane network. And having recently become a senior citizen, I can attest to the convenience of our public transit system in Center City.

We have a new, wonderful, and expanding park along the Schuylkill, and residential and recreational life along the Delaware is beginning to respond to the great public planning process of several years ago, because of which neighborhoods all along the central river front will soon be more connected to the river and to what it offers.

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June on Schuylkill Banks - oil on canvas



24th and Lombard: Morning Coffee - oil on canvas

Forty-five years ago, when I was about to get a graduate degree in Architecture at Penn, I lived in a house at 25th and Waverly Streets. It was there that I met and fell in love with the woman who has been my wife for over 43 years. During that period we have lived in four homes in Center City and raised two children, who graduated from the Philadelphia School System's Central High School. I practiced architecture for thirty years here and have continued as an adjunct professor of architecture at Drexel, to which I have ridden my bike just across the Schuylkill for nearly thirty years, while my wife has continued in a variety of positions in human resources, teaching, and psycho-therapy.

We both have amazingly full lives, and the richness that's within a fifteen minute radius of our home is all that anyone could want.

What could be better? It just takes vigilance and participation.

EDWIN BRONSTEIN, a founding member of DAG, opened his prize-winning architectural practice in 1974. In 2001 he closed his office to devote himself to painting. He says "I paint what I see around me because the light hits it a certain way or because it says something to me about my life, humor, history, or beauty." See more of his work at edbronstein.com.

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