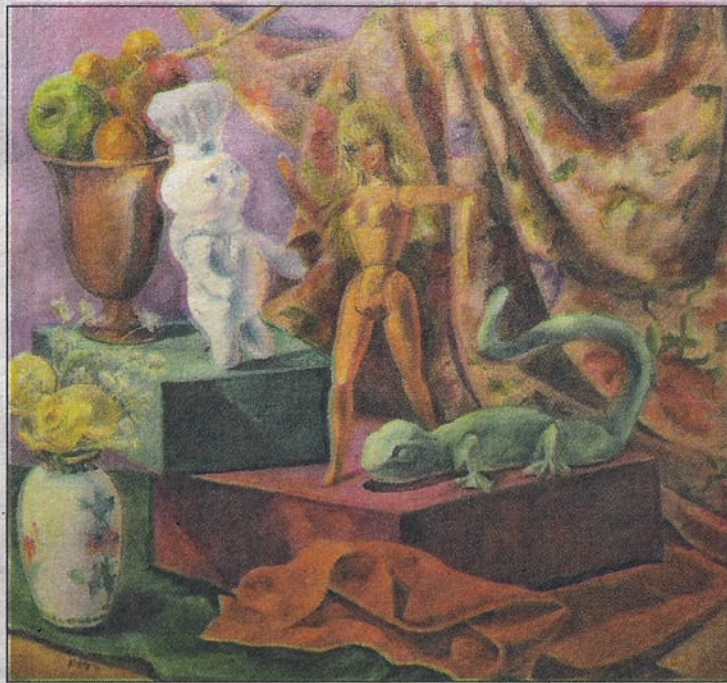


Play time

Bertha Steinhardt Gutman's project as a storytelling artist in her show, "Table-top Narratives, 1991-2011," at Delaware County Community College involves acknowledging the grand legacy established by the world's old-master artists, whose biblical, mythological, and historical subject matter was a framework for the canon of art-historical masterpieces.

Gutman two decades ago undertook her own painting adventure, in which the human figure was replaced by various surrogate dolls, figurines, and statues, from Barbie to Mr. Potato Head. And because, until the mid-19th century, still-life painting was the only artistic endeavor most female artists were allowed to pursue, Gutman decided to try grand-scale figure narrative — within the traditional still-life format.

In the 20 years since receiving her master of fine arts degree, Gut-



"Fall of Man," a painting by Bertha Steinhardt Gutman.

man, who now teaches at Delaware County Community College, produced the 32 oils on this theme — some of them large — that are currently on view in Media. When this unusual project speaks to its audience of college students and visitors, it relies on the power of suggestion, avoiding heavy rhetoric. Silently, the viewer reaches a point of understanding.

Yet it's in the realm of humor and irony that Gutman situates much of her artwork. Two of the pieces, *I Live in a Doll's World* and *Aliens Meet the Earth Goddess*, perhaps sum up her approach. The project emphasizes the whimsical and the funky over the dark or satirical. "Perception and the wondrous act of seeing and painting are always of prime concern to me," Gutman said.

Delaware County Community College,
901 S. Media Line Rd., Media. To Feb.
17. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free.
610-359-5014.