

Paul Biag.

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MONTGOMERY,
Micheline



MORRIS LAMONT/THE TIMES

Mom's an artist

And she even taught her own children

By ALANA PERKINS
Times staff writer

Micheline Montgomery's children are probably the only kids on the block who can say their mother has a body hanging in the living room window.

The figure, entitled Existence, is the first piece of sculpture Montgomery made for her own-woman show which will be exhibited in Oakville's Gala Gardens Gallery in November.

Her Lana Terrace house hasn't grown in proportion with her interest in sculpting, Montgomery says, even though the living room has been stripped of furniture and rugs, and converted into a studio. The fibreglass figure in the window is hanging from the ceiling so she won't take up any valuable floor space.

Working as a psychiatric nurse in the Queen Street Mental Hospital on weekends and as an art teacher in Peel schools has provided her with many insights into human nature, Montgomery says.

One of her favorite crusades concerns the restrictions placed on children in a traditional classroom.

Montgomery took her own three children out of school for four years to teach them herself. Kaleb, 10, Yan, 9 and Kaja, 7, remember their mother conducting science experiments in the kitchen sink, solving math problems, encouraging them to write stories about their excursions, holding pottery classes in the living room and leaving them alone to explore a wealth of

literature, from French Canadian novels to biographies of mystics.

Montgomery applies the same philosophy in teaching art. While teaching collage and tapestry in various Mississauga schools for three years, she abandoned traditional tools, instead handing out nails, shoe polish, lace, suede and beads, and allowing the children to exercise their own creativity.

"I don't think there is enough done with children; we're always doing it for them," Montgomery says. "We tend to downplay a child's art and we try to polish it as adults. Then it's no longer art — it's decoration. If we don't cram a child into a structure, he can be true to himself."

Montgomery strives to keep her art honest. Neighbors and friends often comment that her lifestyle and sculptures are "weird" and ask why she gave up weaving wood figures, a more popular art form.

"Artists are getting very corrupt," says Montgomery, who isn't worried because her art seldom sells. "They get caught up in commercialism just like anyone else and begin to manufacture art that sells well."

Montgomery has a body in her window, too