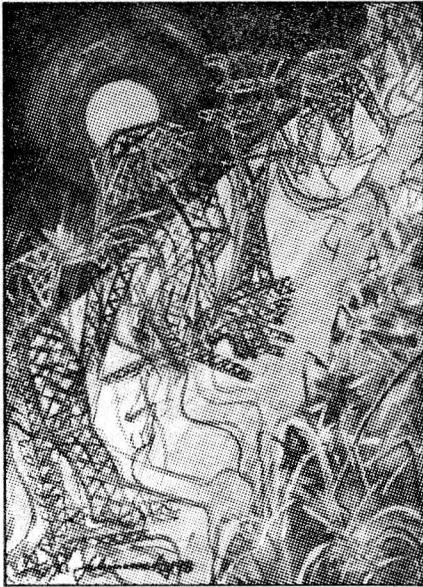


## PREVIEW



Detail of lithograph documenting aftermath of ice storm.

# Ice-storm aftermath is frozen in time

Tree-planting foundation funded by lithograph sales

**DOROTA KOZINSKA**  
*Special to The Gazette*

Life after devastation – that's how Leo Schimanzky describes his latest artistic production. An 18-by-24-inch lithograph exploding with colour is his way of documenting the horror and the spectacle of the January ice storm that struck Quebec and eastern Ontario.

"It's what I have experienced in that devastation," said the Austrian-born Schimanzky, now living in Hudson. "My day-to-day experience I put on canvas."

An established artist, known mainly as a sculptor both in Canada, where he has lived since 1966, and Europe, Schimanzky "struck" the work in a mere two days.

"I was so inspired! I was so charged," he exclaimed, pointing to the lithograph. It shows the scene he witnessed while walking his dog on the shore of Lake of Two Mountains one evening a week into the cataclysm.

Broken pylons litter the edge of the lake, exploding, spilling their wires like entrails on to the snow-covered highway. Lining its other side are ice-coated, crushed trees, an embroidery of twisted branches, and above it all an enormous orange moon wrapped in a green and red halo, like a glowering eye of a Cyclops.

But just translating this unforgettable image to canvas was not enough for Schimanzky, who likes to call himself "the virgin of art" because of his boundless enthusiasm for creation.

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What he came up with borders on Herculean. Schimanzky is printing 1,998 versions of the original work, and each print is personalized with different acrylic touches and hand-signed by the artist.

He has set himself a quota of 20 prints per day, putting aside all other artistic projects.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "They must be finished."

Part of the proceeds from the sale of the works will go to a foundation established by the artist, called the Second Life Tree Donation. Schimanzky hopes to raise at least \$200,000 and organize a tree-planting day in co-operation with mayors of the areas touched by the storm.

Schimanzky has been surprised at the response he's getting. Interviews and media appearances are eating into his production time, but he's not complaining.

Buoyed by the success of his exhibition in Hudson's May studio last month – during which he caused quite a stir by adding touches to the works and, in one case, allowing a young customer to put his fingerprint on the print his father was purchasing – Schimanzky feels everyone should own one of the lithographs.

"This is commemorative artwork," Schimanzky insisted. "It's history, but it's also quality art."

As for the original artwork, Schimanzky decided to auction it internationally to the highest bidder and donate the entire sum to his tree-planting foundation.

Ice Storm '98 prints cost \$1,000 and are hand-finished in acrylic and signed by the artist.

❖ You can see the works and artist Leo Schimanzky at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts gallery, 1390 Sherbrooke St. W., April 15 between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. For more information, please call 458-7166 or 285-1600.