

## VISUAL ARTS » REVIEW



### GARY MICHAEL DAULT GALLERY GOING

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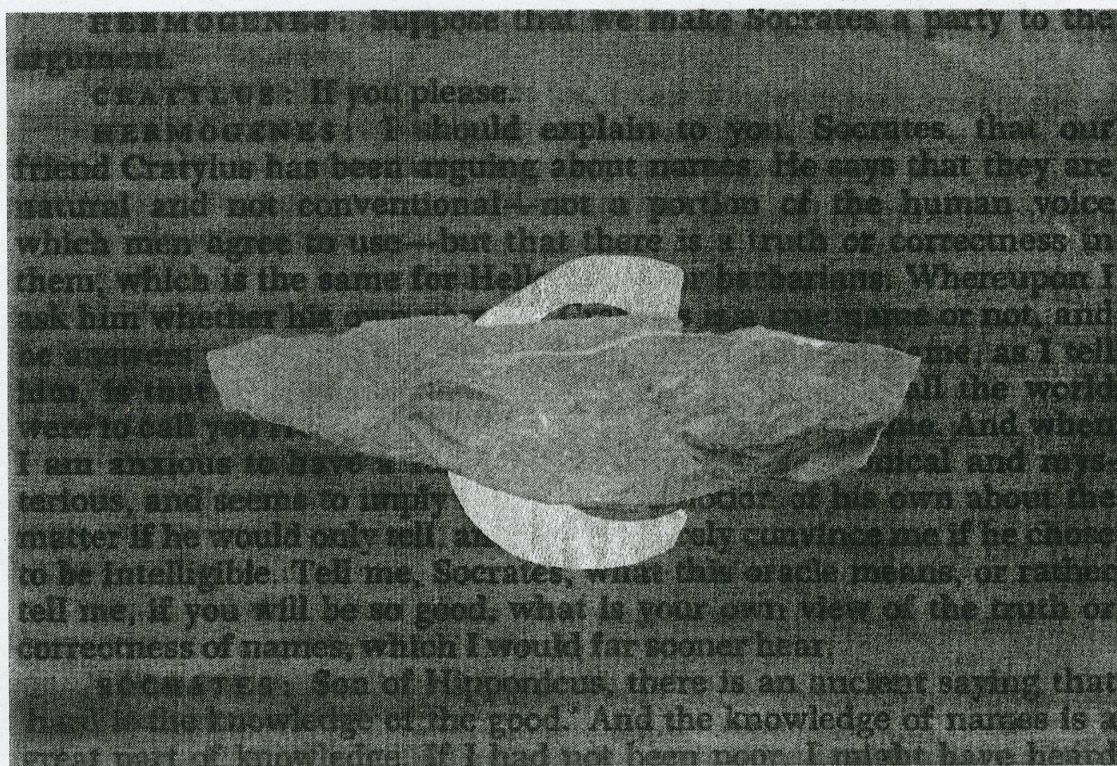
### SIMON GLASS AT INDEX G

\$1,200 each. Until Feb. 1,  
50 Gladstone Ave., Toronto;  
416-535-6957

Toronto photographer Simon Glass's exhibition, *Cratylus*, is a deliciously complex photo-rumination on the nature of language and the ways we derive meaning, whether helpfully or extravagantly, from it.

The show, which takes its title from a Platonic dialogue, consists of eight strikingly handsome giclée prints, each offering a careful photograph of a shard of fossil superimposed on one of the letters (in gold leaf) of the name *Cratylus*. Both layers are then further superimposed upon a darkly hued background text. The texts are culled from such disparate sources as the Tower of Babel saga in the Book of Genesis, poetry by Paul Celan, and Walter Benjamin's essay *On Language as Such and on the Language of Man*.

Language and its mysteries



have always powered the photographic work of Glass, an associate dean at the Ontario College of Art & Design. The *Cratylus* suite seems to have come about (at least partly, to hear Glass tell it) from a wide-ranging conversation about the workings of language with fellow photographer Bob Black. Glass, more or less taking up the *Cratylus* position – that language is innate – sug-

gested to Black that “language precedes humanity.” Black responded in a remarkably non-Socratic way: “I didn’t realize the world was so insecure.”

Does Glass’s *Cratylus* suite dislodge and exhume any thorny language issues? It’s hard to see how it could. But it does something important: It starts you thinking about signs (the fossils, the letters) and the ideas that lurk within

them, about convention in language, and the contesting of originality with understanding. It is a searching and eloquent exhibition.