

NEW YORK  
*Life*

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"I'll be darned! You're right, sir, it does say 'Sweet and sour pork... \$6.50!'"

# Bone Boutique's Resident Curator

## ORDINARY PEOPLE

By **BEVERLY STEPHEN**

Daily News Staff Writer

*Henry Galiano spent too much time in the Museum of Natural History as a child, and a lot of it sketching dinosaurs. That explains how he came to own a bone boutique on Columbus Ave.*

Galiano, a self-taught paleontologist, prefers the term "curator's shop" for Maxilla & Mandible, a small storefront filled with the bleached skulls of Texas longhorns and African antelopes; assorted bones of pythons, bats and Gila monsters; two human skeletons—one plastic and one real.

But there it is, nestled among the gift card and gelato shops, Laura Ashley and Charivari. And even he admits that bones are now a hot item in interior decorating. Ralph Lauren picks up props there to give his Polo shops that Western look. The bones have appeared in Calvin Klein windows at Bloomingdale's and in the Neiman-Marcus fur catalogue.

At the beginning Galiano was just another city kid in search of nature.

"I was born and raised in Spanish Harlem. My father

took me to the Museum of Natural History and it made me want to see the world. My other friends said they couldn't wait to drive a car. I wanted to go on safari in Africa; I wanted to go dig for dinosaur bones."

Instead he went to work for the museum, first as a volunteer, then as a curatorial assistant. In the 14 years he stayed there, he became an expert on vertebrae paleontology, eventually writing his own scholarly papers.

He once sold bottled New York water to raise capital for the business. He then tested his idea of selling bones at a flea market.

"I made \$1,000 the first day. That convinced me."

Soon he was running a thriving wholesale and mail order operation out of a warren of basement laboratories and storerooms under Columbus Ave., just a block away from the museum. A year ago he opened up the retail store where a tuxedo rental shop once stood.

Galiano obtains his specimens from a worldwide network of ranchers, trappers, hunters, zoos, African bushmen—in short, anyone who's



**MAXILLA & MANDIBLE** proprietor Henry Galiano.

likely to come across animal carcasses in a day's work.

"There are no bone brokers. You can't just order an elephant skull."

One elephant skull in the store is selling for \$1,800.

"I've sold several of these to artists with giant lofts who want a showpiece."

Human skeletons that were once available from medical supply houses have been replaced by plastic.

Yes, Maxilla & Mandible does attract more publicity around Halloween. And some customers take a ghoulish rather than a scientific view of

all these bones. But Galiano tries to ignore all that.

"We don't do anything with an item that would embarrass the animal. We don't make coats or clock radios or furniture with horns. We're careful to keep the dignity of the animal intact."

Galiano sees it as his mission to preserve specimens of animals that are likely to become extinct.

"While the animals are living no one is making the effort. But a few years ago no one thought about the Dodo bird or the Tasmanian wolf becoming extinct."