

Gannett Westchester Newspapers/Tuesday, October 10, 1989

# BONE

B R O K E R S



Staff photo/Michael DeChillo

Henry Galiano, former archeologist and owner of Maxilla & Mandible, stands with a synthetic human skeleton from his Manhattan store. Galiano also sells genuine skeletons, but they can cost as much as \$5,000.

## Maxilla & Mandible supplies collectors with natural art

**By Ray Weiss**

Staff Writer

Rich White approached the counter at Maxilla & Mandible and placed his order.

"I'm looking for a kangaroo skull," he told store owner Henry Galiano. "But I heard you're all out of them."

Galiano confirmed the bad news.

"They're hard to come by. The paper work out of Australia is a pain. But I have these," he said, lifting a handsome wart hog skull out of a display case.

After several minutes of inspection and discussion, White settled on the \$290 wart hog and several smaller animal skulls. All would make fine additions to his collection back home in Burlington, N.J.

"I have a very tolerant wife," he said, smiling. "The attic and basement are full. But I don't display them in the house. If I did, I wouldn't have the wife."

Several times a year, White visits the world's only retail bone boutique, nestled among the posh restaurants and shops along Manhattan's Columbus Avenue. A safety engineer for Sybron Chemicals Inc. in New Jersey, he was a working archeologist for 15 years. He and Galiano once worked as curatorial assistants at the American Museum of Natural History.

Bones remain White's real love.

"I get excited about this stuff. Some say they collect for the scientific value. That's part of the reason I do it. That's how I justify it," he said. "But I happen to like bones as art objects. They're really beautiful. I'd sleep on a cot and live in a place like this if I could."

### House of bones

Maxilla & Mandible — named for the upper and lower jaw bones — is a shrine for bone enthusiasts such as White. Customers from all over the world drop by to shop.

On the walls and display cases, they can find a wide assortment of merchandise. There are \$940 kudu skull and horns, \$1,350 boa constrictor skeletons and \$2,200 mounted African Cape Buffalo heads.

Smaller, less expensive items also are available, everything from mounted butterflies and beetles to pickled lizards and Asian seashells.

The 38-year-old Galiano, who grew up in the mean streets of East Harlem, is sitting on top of a golden marrow mine.

"But we don't feel we're selling skulls. It's natural history," he said. "The undertone is science. In a subtle way, we want people to understand conservation and nature. But I don't lie to people. These animals were killed."

Galiano obtains his specimens from a worldwide network of ranchers, trappers,

“We won't do anything that's not ethical. I don't deal with anyone if I don't know where they got something.”

— Henry Galiano  
Maxilla & Mandible  
store owner

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