

NEW LOOK

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NEW FINDS

MAXILLA & MANDIBLE: BONES FOR SALE

Henry Galiano runs the only shop in the world that sells bones. "I stock bones from more than a hundred different species of animals, and I've developed special processes to clean and preserve them," he declares. Galiano sells bones to people who want to recreate a Louise Nevelson painting—or a Calvin Klein ad—in their home. Galiano's shop, Maxilla & Mandible, is located one block from the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

People all over the world send Galiano bones. He has suppliers in Botswana and India, at a buffalo farm in South Dakota, and, of course, in New York City. Kalahari bushmen, New York stockbrokers, derelicts, and amateur bone students provide Galiano with his stock-in-trade. He also sells human skulls and skeletons; he gets these from

medical supply houses.

Building up an international network of suppliers hasn't been easy. It's meant "romancing trappers and people around the world to save what they basically thought of as garbage," Galiano says.

Galiano turns this garbage into "perfectly clean, perfectly white, perfectly reconstructed bones." Bones you'd want to take home. He worked at the American Museum of Natural History for ten years, and he continues the bone preservation research he started there in his shop laboratory. He has two assistants working with him. "It's scrape, scrape, scrape, boil, boil, boil," Galiano describes the process. Fish skeletons are cleaned by maceration, insect colonies lay bare small mammal skulls, and big bones soak in peroxide.

But "the fun part," Henry says, is reconstruction. This is also the most

labor-intensive part of the operation. It can involve gluing a skull together, or reconstructing a skeleton from a jumble of bones.

At any one time, Maxilla & Mandible has in stock "a couple of thousand animal skulls" and "over a hundred human skulls." Even though the shop's inventory represents more than a hundred species, there are still orders he can't fill. "Someone wanted a tiger skull once," Henry says, "and another time I had a request for whale vertebrae. I can't touch that stuff. Those are protected species."

Galiano has to comply with international, national, and state laws regulating traffic in animals. One of the things he hopes to accomplish with Maxilla & Mandible is to make government agencies aware of the value of animals found dead. "Instead of burying a whale that's washed up on the beach, maybe the government could let someone come in and clean it out. There aren't that many animals left on the face of the earth. We should save all we can of the ones we've got."

At this writing, a rat skull costs \$10 at Maxilla & Mandible, an impala skull about \$150, an elephant skull as much as \$1,800, and a fully articulated

human skeleton is about \$750. Requested most often are skulls of large horned animals.

Who buys bones? "Seventy percent of our customers are extremely well-educated," Henry states. "It takes some sophistication to come in here and appreciate what we've got." And most of the sales have been to private individuals who want dem bones for their homes—the new Yorick look?

But the shop has filled its share of flashy orders. M & M's bones appeared in Michael Jackson's "Torture" video, will be on the cover of a Grateful Dead album, and are pictured in



the Neiman-Marcus fur collection. The shop provided a dog skull for a court case, and Galiano also works as a consultant.

Some of the shop's clients, however, are more than a little bizarre. "I think it's a good thing we're here to sell some of these people bones," Galiano says.

Maxilla & Mandible provided bones for two gallery shows last fall, one on each coast. Henry Galiano's wares are art now, with the magic still intact.

—Katherine Bloch



Skulls and skeletons on sale: Henry Galiano at the only retail bone shop in the world.

