

NEW YORK

OCTOBER 21, 1985

GALLOPING CONSUMPTION

MR. BONES

MAXILLA & MANDIBLE, New York's only bone store, is right where it should be:

underground at 78 West 82nd Street, isolated from the fleshly pleasures of the Upper West Side.

Isolated, but not unnoticed. This fall, M&M's skeletons are coming out of closets all across America—in gallery shows on both coasts, on the cover of the forthcoming Grateful Dead album, in Michael Jackson's "Torture" video. The store's bones will be used to illustrate expert testimony in the courtroom, and will appear in the Neiman-Marcus fur collection.

The man behind the aesthetic reassessment of bone is Henry Galiano, an exuberant 34-year-old self-



"Scrape, scrape, scrape, boil, boil, boil."

taught scientist. The shop is "an art gallery," he says, entering one of the two bone-filled exhibition spaces, where a bleached tuna tail fans

out near a skeleton of New York's unloved mascot, the pigeon.

But as Galiano enters the shop laboratory, he changes his mind. "Maybe 'museum' is a better word to describe what we're doing here." Bone-preservation research here furthers work conducted at Galiano's former place of employment, the American Museum of Natural History. "It's scrape, scrape, scrape, boil, boil, boil," Galiano says. The methods of removing flesh are the time-honored stuff of novels and movies of the macabre. It's maceration for the fish, bug colonies for the delicate rat skulls, tubs of peroxide for the big bones.

The store, a block north of the museum, serves as a clearinghouse for a nation of amateur osteologists, painters, and folks attracted to the bizarre. Galiano says he's got something for everyone: the feminist cartoonist who shows her work in the bathrooms of the East Village, the slam dancer seeking a human-toe bone, the leather-coated member of the Hell's Angels ("The

skull's been our registered trademark for over 40 years," says Butch, a leader of the New York pack).

A "city kid who grew up on the city streets," Galiano says he can look at his face in the mirror and isolate the skeletal structures that define his Cuban and Chinese heritage. He gained early experience in anatomy in his parents' East Harlem apartment, where he dissected mice and rats and conducted experiments on the fauna of his ecosystem: "I once tried to raise albino cockroaches."

After ten years at the museum, first as a volunteer, then as a curatorial assistant—he has a species of saber-toothed cat,



A springbok skull.

Nimravidés galiani, named after him—Galiano decided to test his business talents. Starting the shop entailed setting up contacts with suppliers in Botswana and at an Indian medical-supply company, at a South Dakota buffalo farm and with the fishmongers at the Fulton market. His skeleton crew now includes Kalahari

Bushmen, Forest Hills ornithologists, stockbrokers, and derelicts. The tuna tails, for example, are scavenged from the garbage by an

army of down-and-outers who are paid a couple of bucks by a financier who personally delivers the tails to Galiano's store. "He drives those tails," Galiano says, "in an '85 Caddy." ALLEN KURZWEIL



A beaver skull.