

Fill in the bare bones of an idea at New York's Maxilla & Mandible

Walking into Maxilla & Mandible is like stepping into the private study of an obsessive osteologist. The small storefront is filled with creamy white bones and skulls. In the mahogany and glass display cases are velvet-lined trays of bear claws, lion claws and bison incisors. Mounted butterfly specimens and large animal skulls cover the walls.

In 1983 vertebrate paleontologist Henry Galiano founded Maxilla & Mandible, Ltd. in a basement laboratory across the street from New York's American Museum of Nat-

ural History. The company's primary function was the preservation, preparation, and reconstruction of specimens for museums and collectors. His client list and mail order operations began to grow, and in 1986 he opened a retail shop above the laboratory.

The shop makes Maxilla & Mandible more accessible to the general public, but Galiano states, "We are not a store for everyone, and we don't want to be."

A young man considering a bison skull is put off by a bullet hole over the left eye. Galiano suggests an African cape buffalo

skull, but the customer is afraid it won't complement his decor. "I'm doing my apartment in *Southwest*," he says.

"We are a natural history shop, not a skull store," Galiano explains. "Most of the people who just walk into the store don't appreciate what they see." He points to the 3-foot-long, reconstructed, \$1,600 skeleton of a striped bass. "The people who buy from us are very knowledgeable," and appreciate the work required to reconstruct a rabbit skeleton (\$235), for example.

Everything is prepared and reconstructed to museum quality standards. Galiano and many of his employees worked for the American Museum of Natural History. Most of them are scientists specializing in anatomy, paleontology or natural sciences. Sources for the bones include game wardens, ranchers, trappers and—for the human bones—medical supply companies.

The underground laboratory is reminiscent of a visit to the House of Frankenstein. "People have paid me to take them down here," Galiano smiles. One might imagine its allure for scientists, teachers and natural history fans.

The bones also are enticing to artists, decorators and designers. Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, along with many of New York's major department stores, have rented assorted bones and skulls for window displays. The store has provided one-of-a-kind items for movies like "Clan of the Cave Bear" and TV shows as diverse as "60 Minutes" and "Saturday Night Live," which needed a cat skeleton—to throw.

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