

New York's latest hot offering is a store that has bones to pick

By Joseph Ferullo

SPECIAL TO THE EXAMINER

NEW YORK — "This stuff stops people dead in their tracks," Henry Galiano said as he leaned against a bookcase lined with two dozen human skulls.

"And they're very decorative."

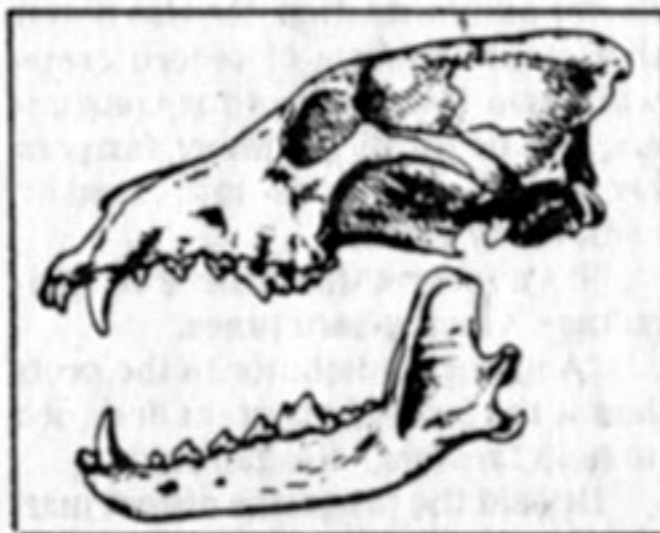
Galiano is the owner of Maxilla & Mandible Ltd., a shop in Manhattan that sells skeletons, skulls and bones. It has been open to the public only for about a year, but Galiano's unique stock apparently appeals to New Yorkers.

Suddenly, skulls are *in*.

"They're replacing posters and prints in the home," Galiano said, pointing to a wall of 45 horned animal skulls, including cows and cape buffaloes from Africa. "You don't get tired of them. It's not a fad."

The human skulls sell for \$79 each and the horned animal skulls for about \$185. The skull of an African elephant retails for about \$1,600.

Maxilla & Mandible — the name comes from the two teeth-bearing bones of the jaw — is the first retail bone shop in the country, although there are wholesale sellers of skeletons and bones for the medical profession. The sign outside says, "Importers of biological supplies," but Galiano said 90 percent of his cus-



Dog
(\$36)

tomers are from the arts and fashion worlds.

Galiano has done windows at Bloomingdale's for Calvin Klein. His bones have appeared in movies, in at least one rock video and on the cover of a Grateful Dead album.

He gets the bones from contacts he made during his 13 years in the vertebrate paleontology department of the Museum of Natural History, just three blocks from his store.

Most animal bones, he said, come from ranches in the western United States: buffalo skeletons from Wyoming, beaver skeletons from trappers in Colorado.



African warthog
(\$125-350)

The human skeletons are the remains of cadavers used by medical schools. They had been thought of as trash — biological leftovers — until Galiano realized that people would pay cash for them.

Galiano's small workshop sits off of his main showroom, which is lined with 15 human skeletons and smaller, more delicate skeletons of fish and fowl. The bones, he said, come to him "meat-free," but he spends about five hours on each, bleaching to white and applying floor wax for protection.



Hippo
(\$175-950)

The front room is set up like a candy store, with a counter filled by "novelty items" — \$10 rat skulls, animal teeth for 50 cents apiece tossed in an old cigar box like so much penny candy.

Women seem more interested in the bones as art than men are, Galiano said. "Most men think they're interesting, but don't know what you'd do with them."

"Men do like the human skulls, though. It seems to be a macho thing."



Wildebeest
(\$65-250)

His most-desired item right now is the skeleton of a tuna's tail. The end acts as a standing base, and two fins, tipped by delicate bones that look almost like feathers, spring out from the top of the base.

Galiano said few "kooks" come into his store. "They're afraid of this place. One came in and told me it had evil spirits," he said.

Business this year runs in the "high six figures," Galiano said. By next year, he figures to gross more than \$1 million annually.



Giraffe
(\$250-1,200)

"Come again soon," Galiano yelled to one customer on his way out. "And think of us at Christmas time."