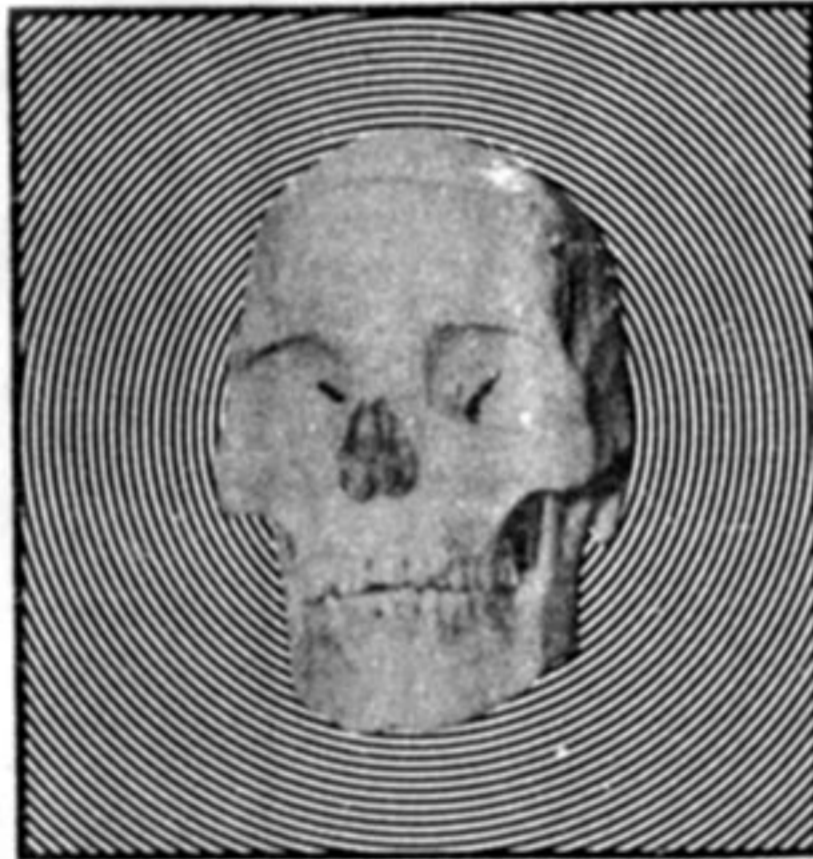


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Bones



PHILIP GREENBERG

Bones—the next wave, according to Henry Galinao.

By PAUL SCHWARTZMAN

Somewhere next to a Chinese laundry on the Upper West Side, in a shop underground, a man is selling a product that could revolutionize interior design: skulls and bones.

Yes, if Henry Galinao has his way—and he will have his way, skeletons will join glass coffee tables and hanging plants as the cen-

terpieces of American living rooms.

The question is: will skulls and bones play in Peoria?

Galinao, who owns the shop, Maxilla & Mandible, located on West 82nd Street, thinks they will—eventually.

"This is the only country where bones are taboo. We live in a Micky Mouse world. We're cut off from reality and anything connected with the unknown," he said.

But Galinao, 33, has a plan which he thinks will turn the taboo into a fad. First, he'll sell his goods to artists and designers. Through the, skulls and bones will infiltrate the media. And then, Peoria will consume fibials, tibias, and humeri bones like they're going out of style.

"It's the artists who dictate style," said Galinao, a former studio artist. "Art tells the population what it wants."

Since he opened Maxilla & Mandible in 1983, Galinao reports that skulls and bones are appearing in SoHo lofts, artists' studios and window displays at Bloomingdale's.

"Because of me," Galinao doesn't mind saying, "closet skeleton collectors are coming out."

But Galinao is not solely interested in money. He wants to use the cash flow to generate other projects. His main objective is to revamp our education system so children learn to count on, say, lions' teeth rather than blocks and sticks.

"I'm after the entire educational system," he

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said confidently. "I think there's a way to teach everything through nature."

For now, however, Galinao subsists off such clients as Calvin Klein and Michael Jackson, who rented "Charlie," a full grown human skeleton, for one of his videos.

Besides artists and designers, Galinao's visitors are people who enjoy including skulls and bones in various rituals, whether they be sexual, religious or both.

"I don't ask any questions," he said laughing.

Galinao buys his animal bones from game wardens all over the world. He has everything from ostrich eggs, \$27, to cape buffalo skulls the size of—well, a Buick, for \$700.

When asked where he buys human skeletons, Galinao grinned and said, medical supply companies overseas. "How's that for an answer," he laughed.

Behind the front counter, divided neatly between three rows are 19 human skulls. Galinao refers to them as specimens.

"That's not an old lady," he said, emphatically pointing at one of them. "That's a specimen. An old lady has grey hair; she's little and she talks. These skulls don't talk—they're skulls."

"My favorite skulls don't even look like skulls. It's boring when they look like heads. We're not selling human beings here."

Galinao says he's sensitive to how the public views his specimens. He's convinced skulls and bones are an essential part of natural history, and should not be regarded as perverse or morbid.

"Morbid is when you see a junkie shooting up, or a woman after she's been raped. Gore bothers me, and I've seen lots of it," he said softly. "To me, the world is a very ugly place. But here, with all these specimens, I can escape."

Galinao's retreat into the natural world began in 1971 with an internship at the American Museum of Natural History.

He was 21 years old and was at the fifth grade level. Within six months, however, he was offered a job at the museum.

"I could barely read or write when I got to

the museum," he recalled. "Up to then I could communicate through my art. But now I was around people who could speak and write, and I became conscious of what I couldn't do."

So Galinao began spending hours in the museum's library, "polluting" himself with natural history books and journals. And now, he is a published paleontologist.

In 1983, he published an article in the Journal of Paleontology entitled, "Meganteon Hesperus From the Late Hemphillian of Florida with Remarks on the Phylogenetic Relationships of Madrodonts."

Cats, Galinao said, smiling. The history of the saber tooth cat.

After 13 years at the museum, Galinao opened his store with the help of six investors.

For now, Galinao is pleased with his unobtrusive little store that seems to draw more customers than the laundry next door.

But Galinao doesn't want too much attention yet. He wants to creep up on the commercial world.

"Part of the beauty of this business is that I get people in here who are earthy," he said. "I don't get people in here who are into Sassoon jeans, and wear Walkmans."

One night, Galinao had a special visitor. "I'm sitting in here late one rainy night and suddenly I hear this 'vroom vroom' from outside. Next thing I know the president of the Hells' Angels is standing in my doorway."

"So I ended up talking to him for awhile and showing him around the store, and he ended up telling me about his pet hamster and turtle. He was actually a sweet guy. When he left he told me that I should call him if anyone ever gave me trouble."

As for area residents, Galinao said he has a fine relationship with them.

"I find it interesting, it's intriguing," said one woman as she walked by the store. "I got bones myself."

When she was asked about the store, another woman giggled and continued to giggle as she quickly walked away.

The only person who seemed to have trouble with the skeletons in her midst was the woman who owns the laundry next door.

"During the day, it's OK," she said quite seriously. "But at night, I get scared. Chinese people don't like these things."