photograph - Skeleton of Man and of the Male Gorilla II

Object: photograph
Place of origin: London (photographed)
Date: c.1855 (photographed)
Artist/Maker: Fenton, Roger, born 1819 - died 1869 (photographer)
Materials and Techniques: Salted paper print mounted on printed card
Museum number: 40850

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level F, case X, shelf 40, box B

Public access description
When this photograph was taken, Roger Fenton was the official photographer at the British Museum. (The British Museum then held the collections that now comprise the Natural History Museum.) The human skeleton depicted is of no special significance, apart from the fact that it is probably of a European. The gorilla, however, shows evidence of severe trauma to its left arm - a bite from a lion to the lower part of its left humerus. Gorillas do not spend much time 'standing' upright because it takes muscle energy for them to do so. Thus, the supposedly 'neutral' presentation of a gorilla skeleton is in fact the presentation of an idea: 'a gorilla standing is not too different from a human standing'.

Descriptive line
Photograph by Roger Fenton, 'Skeleton of Man and of the Male Gorilla (Troglodytes Gorilla) II', salted paper print, c.1855

Physical description
Two skeletons, photographed in profile side by side for comparative purposes.

Dimensions
Height: 20.6 cm, Width: 16.4 cm

Museum number
40850

URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1077972/skeleton-of-man-and-of-photograph-fenton-roger/