Photograph - Skeleton of Man and of the Male Gorilla (Troglodytes Gorilla)

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: 40849

Gallery location: Prints & Drawings Study Room, level F, case EDUC, shelf 13.1

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, 'Skeleon of Man and of the Male Gorilla (Troglodytes Gorilla)', salted paper print, c.1855

Physical description

Two skeletons photographed side by side for comparative purposes. Printed with Fenton's credit.

Dimensions

Height: 36.5 cm, Width: 28 cm

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URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O91308/skeleton-of-man-and-of-photograph-fenton-roger/