

# Third-century Roman sculptures discovered

February 9 2011

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This handout picture released by the press office of the Italian cultural ministry (IMBAC) shows ancient Roman marble statues dated from the third century found inside an ancient Roman villa in Rome. Archaeologists have unearthed a set of six marble sculptures in Rome that likely belonged to a high-ranking official of the Roman Empire, Italy's culture ministry said Wednesday.

Archaeologists have unearthed a set of six marble sculptures in Rome that likely belonged to a high-ranking official of the Roman Empire, Italy's culture ministry said Wednesday.

Led by Roberto Egidi, the group of [archaeologists](#) dug up five marble heads representing members of the Severan imperial dynasty as well as a statue of the Greek god Zeus while excavating a public site.

The figures were buried in an ancient fountain of a lavish Roman villa along the Via Anagnina street in southeast Rome.

The "extraordinary" discovery, one of the biggest and most important in recent memory in the Italian capital, sheds light on housing conditions in the suburbs during the imperial period, the ministry said in a statement.

The sculptures, which were unearthed Tuesday, will be handed over to the National Museum of Rome and will be preserved at the Diocletian Baths near Termini station where they will undergo preliminary restorations immediately.

"It may be that the last owner of the villa was a high-ranking official related to the dynasty" of [Roman Emperor](#) Septimius Severus, the statement said.

"The existence of a mausoleum dating back to the late imperial period reinforces such a hypothesis due to the ritual, common in the second and third centuries, of burying the owner next to his house," it added.

Severus ruled in 193-211 A.D, restoring stability, though not without bloodshed, to the empire after the turbulent reign of his predecessor Commodus. He founded the Severan dynasty that ended in 235 with the assassination of one of his heirs.

The digs were financed by a group of private entrepreneurs who took action after the discovery last June of other [relics](#) belonging to the sumptuous Roman country house.

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Citation: Third-century Roman sculptures discovered (2011, February 9) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-third-century-roman-sculptures.html>

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