

# Brazil recovers ancient human fossil fragments from burnt Rio museum

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Fragments of the oldest human fossil found within today's Brazilian borders, known as "Luzia" were recovered among the rubble of Rio de Janeiro's National Museum after a fire destroyed the building

Brazilian officials said Friday they have recovered pieces of a

12,000-year-old fossil of a neolithic woman that was among the prized artifacts in Rio de Janeiro's burnt down National Museum.

"We found almost all of the skull and 80 percent of its fragments have been identified," museum director Alexander Kellner said, adding that fragments of a femur were also uncovered from the ashes.

The fossil, nicknamed "Luzia," was discovered in 1970 in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais by a French-led expedition.

A Manchester University team later did a digital face reconstruction based on the skull, which was used to model a sculpture of the ancient woman.

That sculpture went up in flames on September 2 along with most of the museum's 20 million artifacts. But the original skull fragments, kept in a metal urn in a closet, were found a few days ago.

"They've suffered alterations, damage. But we're very optimistic at the find and all it represents," said Claudia Rodrigues, a professor at the [museum](#) who has been picking through the debris.

The 200-year-old institution was considered the main [natural history museum](#) in Latin America, and was known for its paleontology department and its 26,000 fossils.

The cause of the fire is under investigation.

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