



Carrara Marble: a nomination for Global Heritage Stone Resource

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Carrara Marble: A nomination for “Global Heritage Stone Resource”

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ABSTRACT

In the collective memory, in ordinary people, or in any technical office not devoted expressly to stone, marble is automatically associated with the word Carrara (Italy). Indisputably, for decades and decades, there has been this word association: marble means Carrara and Carrara means marble. In few other commodity sectors is a word so automatically associated with a name, engendering an identification process that, despite the inexorable onslaught of globalization, continues to exist.

Carrara Marble, probably one of the most famous dimension stone in the world, has been recently designated as a suitable “Global Heritage Stone Resource”. The additional designation of “Global Ornamental Stone” has also been proposed.

Quarried since pre-Roman times, this marble is the testimonial of an area/industry that was able - for a variety of reasons not easily repeatable in future stone history - from the dawn of the stone sector to trigger a flywheel-effect on a global scale.

The term Carrara Marble, geographically referable to the marbles extracted in the surroundings of Carrara town, is in reality a general one, erroneously used since long time to define a multitude of different marbles (more than two hundred commercial varieties) extracted in the whole Apuane Alps region, Northwestern Tuscany, Italy.

The district of Carrara Marble is part of a wider territory where five important extractive areas can be recognized: Lunigiana, Garfagnana, Versilia, Massa and the Carrara area sensu stricto. This region is approximately 30 km long and 12 km wide, with marble outcrops, useful for commercial purposes, covering over 75 km².

The Carrara Marble is currently excavated in more than 100 quarries, at a rate of about 1.500.000 tons per year, is processed almost everywhere, and sold all over the world.

The most important commercial designations are the following: 1) "Marmo Bianco"/"Marmo Ordinario" (Carrara White marble/Ordinary marble); 2) "Marmo Venato" (Veined marble); 3) "Marmo Bardiglio" (Bardiglio marble); 4) "Marmo Nuvolato" (Cloud-like marble); 5) "Marmo Arabescato" (Arabesque-like marble); 6) "Marmo Statuario"/"Statuario Venato" (Statuary marble/Veined statuary); 7) "Marmo Calacata" (Calacata marble). These seven main varieties can be subdivided into many other types due to slight chromatic variations which are often characteristics of a very restricted area, or just one quarry, or even one limited period of time.

Apart from its intrinsic geological, petrographic, commercial and technical properties, several issues related to the Carrara Marble are considered to be of relevant importance for its designation as a Global Ornamental Stone”, among which the Marble Museum, the Fine Arts Academy, the Artistic Marble Consortium, the Sculpture Museum, the historical commemoration of the “lizzatura” and the remnants of the marble railway stand out.