Rosso Verona marble (Italy): proposed as a candidate for "Global Heritage Stone Resource"

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Rosso Verona marble (RV) is the commercial name for an ammonite-bearing, pink-red, nodular, limestone, occurring near the city of Verona, North Italy, hence the name “Rosso Verona marble”.

Geologically speaking, RV belongs to the Rosso Ammonitico Veronese (RAV) Formation, a Middle-Upper Jurassic unit within the Mesozoic successions of the Trento Plateau, within which it comprises the stratigraphic interval between the top of platform carbonates (Early Jurassic) and the base of the micritic pelagic limestones of the Maiolica Formation (Uppermost Jurassic-Lower Cretaceous; “Biancone” of older authors).

The RAV Formation dominant features are the presence of hardgrounds, highlighted by Fe and Mn oxide encrustations and recording breaks in sedimentation, colour variations, and abundance of nodular facies and bioturbation. In the Verona area, the RAV is less than 30 m thick and is subdivided into three units and eight different facies (pseudonodular, mineralized, bioclastic, nodular, thin-bedbed limestone, thin-bedded cherty limestone, subnodular, stromatolitic). The lowest unit is formed by pseudonodular, mineralized and massive facies; the middle unit is formed by thin bedded, cherty and subnodular limestones; the upper unit is composed of stromatolitic, pseudonodular and nodular limestones.

Since Roman age, several levels of the RAV have been object of intensive excavation. Nowadays, the quarrying activity is still active in a few quarries, located in Valpolicella valley (Verona province), between the municipalities of S. Ambrogio and Monte, in the surroundings of Mount Pastello.

RV relevant versatility has made possible its application almost in any field: from rural landscape to traditional building, from sculpture to architectural works, from fine crafts objects to modern 3D realizations.

We find it in many historical artistic and architectural buildings, such as the Ducal Palace and San Marco Basilica in Venice, many famous monuments in Verona (the “Arena”, the Pietra Bridge, the
Roman Theatre), and in all the most important churches and religious building in North Italy (Bologna cathedral; Parma Cathedral, Cremona cathedral etc.).

Sought-after and appreciated by architects, sculptors and designers for its chromatic and textural features, RV has been and still is, one of the driving marbles of the traditional Italian dimension stone production.

The note intends to provide a synthetic overview of RV marble and to propose it as a candidate to GHSR designation.

Such a candidature is supported not only by its intrinsic geological and petrographic features, but also by several factors which are considered to fulfill the basic requisites for a GHSR designation. Among the most important, worth of mention are:

- its enormous impact on the history, traditions and culture of the Verona area,
- its almost ubiquitous use as a decorative stone (statues, columns, monuments, cosmatesque floors, inlays etc.),
- the importance of MARMOMACC, the yearly Verona International Fair (considered the most important worldwide Fair of the Dimension Stone sector),
- its current diffusion on a planetary scale,
- the presence of an institutional body, the Verona District, which collects an impressive number of companies whose level of expertise, experience and competence has few equal all around the world.