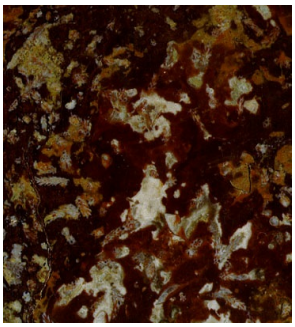
MARC MAISON

120, rue des rosiers
93400 Saint Ouen
(France)
tel: +33.(0)6.60.62.61.90
contact@marcmaison.com



Sample of Red of Rance marble



Diane salon, the walls are adorned with powerful Red of Rance and Green Campan marble moldings, Versailles Palace.



Detail of the marble panel in in the Diane salon, Versailles Palace.

Rance, a town in the Walloon region in the**Belgian province of Hainaut**, was the site of a marble quarry that produced building material for the Versailles Palace. **Rance** was one of the oldest and most important marble sites, but today the quarries are closed.

Louis XIV added a **Red of Rance marble colonnade** to the façade of the part of the Versailles Palace that was built during the reign of Louis XIII. Red marble from Rance or "*Old Rance*" was probably the most prolifically used marble to decorate the palace, mainly in the "**Galerie des Glaces** " (Hall of Mirrors) and the main portico in the **Cour des Marbres**" (Marble Courtyard), but also in different salons or sitting rooms, used for columns, capitals, panelling, etc.. The beauty of this marble suited Louis XIVth's desire to use only the most noble of materials for his palace. From 1660 to 1670, **Colbert**, Louis XIV's state secretary, promoted a marble policy. The Northern ressources, now French, were much appreciated especially Red of Rance marble. As the construction of the palace began, the Margelle quarry in Rance produced most of the marbles, but as the demand grew a new quarry was opened and subsequently called the "*Trou de Versailles*" (hole of Versailles).

"*Vieux Rance*" (Old Rance) is a reddish-brown, dark cherry-red limestone, speckled with a myriad of "rat tails" (as refered to by marble carvers), grey veins, and white more or less lenticular spots. This marble, like the other red marbles from Belgium, is extracted from dome-shaped sedimentary rock that can be as much as 230feet thick.
Red of Rance marble was much used as decorative material for furniture and architecture in the Paris region in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. Continuing this trend, the Regence style and period favored strong colored marbles such as Antique Green, Portor and especially Red of Rance, still exploited for mantels, and for the tops of "*commodes-tombeau*" (chest of drawers resembling sarcophagi) matched with Rosewood - a wood that has very similar veining to the Belgian marble. **Red of Rance** was also highly used for marquetry furniture, often used in combination with a variety of wood species. However it was seldom used with lacquered furniture although we do find **Red of Rance marble** tops that work in harmony with red lacquered furniture, or in association with a red mantel piece. In the period of transition from the Rococo and Louis XV style to the neoclassical and Louis XVI style, Red of Rance marble was often associated with mahogany furniture, the marble reflected in the reddish brown hues of the wood. In the early 19th century, **Napoleon**, newly made King of Italy, largely exploited Italian quarries and the colors of marble then in style were Red Griotte marble, white marbles, Blue Turquin marble, Antique Green, and Sea Green. In the Restoration period and during the July Monarchy grey, white and black marbles were predominantely used. Nevertheless, the workshops in Rance remained active all during the 19th century and until 1952-1953 the warm hues of this red marble continued to please buyers.

See also

Palace of Versailles — Louis XIV style — Régence style — Louis XV style — Louis XVI style — Rouge Royal marble — Griotte marble — Red Languedoc marble

See our marble fireplaces