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Sample of Grand Antique marble



Art Deco fireplace realized by Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann in Grand Antique marble in the 1930's



Detail of the fireplace by Jacques-Emile Ruhlmann



Grave of Joseph Napoléon Bonaparte at the Saint-Louis-des-Invalides church in Paris in Grand Antique marble



Table coming from the Grande Poste du Capitole de Toulouse at the Musée de Bagnères de Bigorre realized in Grand Antique marble.

Grand Antique marble, known and used since Antiquity, was quarried in the Lez valley near Aubert, a village near Saint-Girons in Ariège (Midi-Pyrénées). Highly decorative, it is mainly used for columns, wall cladding and other architectural decorations, fireplaces, table tops and for *pietra dura*.

Exploited by the **Romans** as early as the 3rd century, it was known as *"Marmor Celticum"*. From that time onwards, it was exported to Rome and Constantinople in large quantities. Grand Antique was very popular during the Byzantine period, particularly for pillars and columns: it was used to decorate one of the masterpieces of Byzantine architecture, Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul. When, later in the Byzantine era, the quarries were closed, the existing elements continued to be reused by Roman stonemasons. These elements can be seen in many of Rome's medieval and baroque churches. They were also used in *pietra dura* workshops.

The Aubert quarry reopened in the 17th century, but was lost again in 1671.

However, it was able to be quarried again from the **19th century** onwards (it was then nicknamed "*Grand Deuil*") and throughout the **20th century**. It became the material of choice for Jacques-Émile Ruhlmann's Art Deco fireplaces. The quarry was exhausted and is now closed.

The popularity of this marble over the centuries can be seen in the monuments it adorns today. Three column shafts in the thermal baths of the **Musée de Cluny** in Paris, several columns in **Tarbes cathedral**, the base of the statue of Saint Peter in **Westminster cathedral** in London, four pedestals in the Salon de Diane at the **Château de Versailles**, the table in the Grande Poste of the **Capitole in Toulouse**, now in the Musée de Bagnères in Bigorre, bear witness to this... Finally, in the **church of Saint-Louis-des-Invalides in Paris**, the baldachin of the altar is supported by four twisted columns in Grand Antique, while the tomb of Joseph Bonaparte, in the same place, was also executed in this marble.

See also

Sarrancolin Fantastico — Campan marble — Red Languedoc marble — Griotte marble — Palace of Versailles — Art Deco style

See our marble fireplaces