

## Pietra Paesina

### “Landscape Stone”

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*Ruin Marble Landscape – Unknown source*

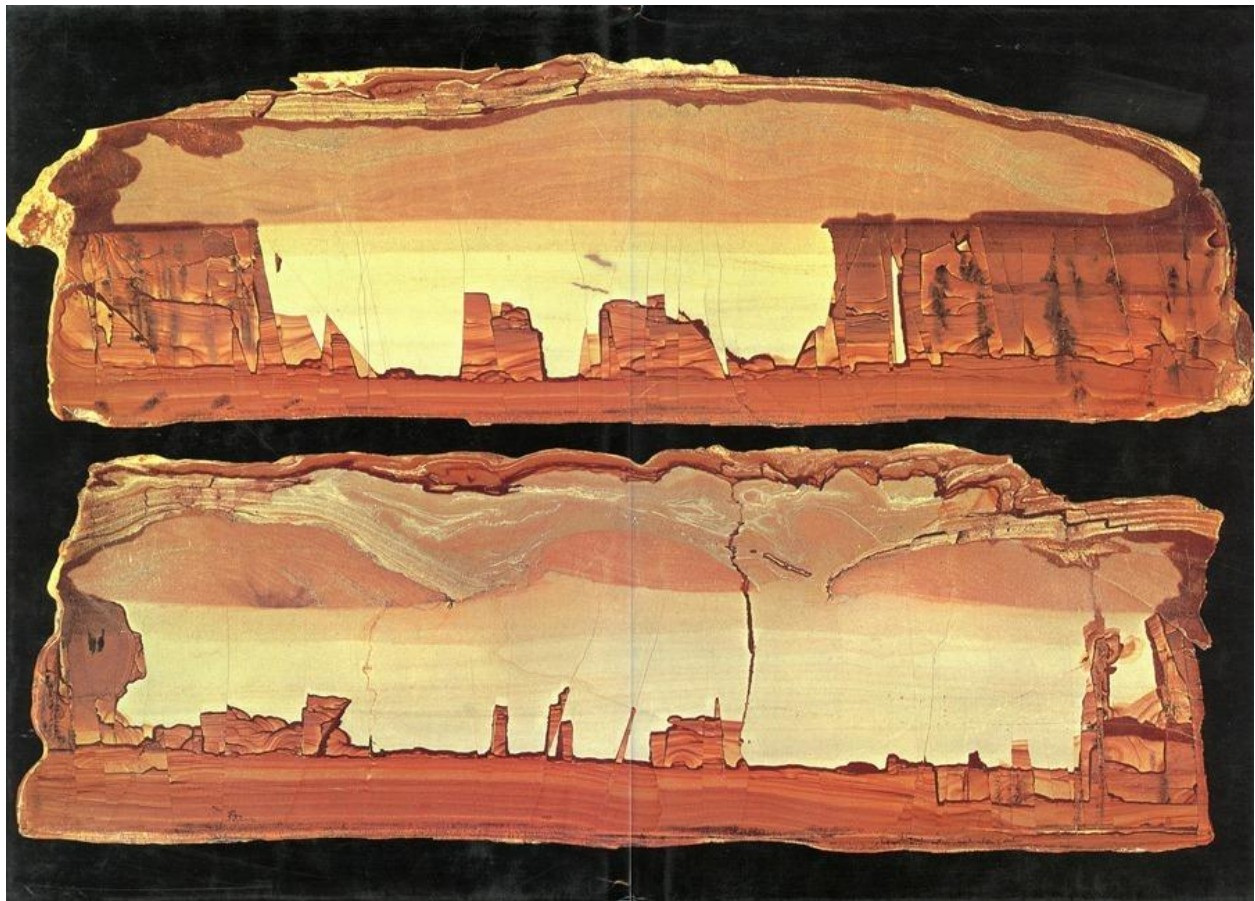
Deep within the Earth in the Northern Apennine mountains near the city of Florence, Italy and in some parts of Austria, you can find the ruins of dead cities; at least that's what Pietra Paesina looks like. Pietra Paesina or “ruin marble” is a conglomeration of silty limestone, clay and other minerals that co-mingle to form light and dark patterns that seem uncannily geometric, often giving the impression of a ruined cityscape or a mountainous landscape. Some have said it looks as though Earth has taken a snapshot of itself in rock.

The patterns likely formed during the Eocene epoch period around 40 to 50 million years ago. The geological conditions needed to create the unique images were rare. Immense pressure created by the movement of the Earth's crust fractured the limestone beds of an ancient sea that rose up when the African Plate collided with the European Plate. The fractures in the sedimentary stone were subsequently filled by iron and manganese hydroxide deposited as groundwater seeped up through still-forming minerals, mixing and aligning the stones into the picture-like images. The cracks were later sealed by the deposition of calcite crystals.

In addition to the architectural forms and patterns that have been created by the seeping liquids, small fossils and algae caught up in the stone appear to generate texture and results in more natural, eye-catching shapes, often resembling foliage or smoke. Color-wise, ruin marble tends to run the gamut from bleak grays and blacks to the brighter hues of oranges and reds where the iron and limestone come together.

Ruin marble was discovered in the 16th century, and since then has been much sought after by collectors around the world. During the Renaissance, the royal courts of the Medici viewed it as a precious ornament and had their Florentine artisans use the stone to decorate architectural elements and furniture. Sometimes the natural landscape in the stones were completed with painted figures, mythical creatures and objects. Many of these pieces have ended up in museums, which is still the best place to catch a glimpse of these “landscapes”.

Finding a specimen of Pietra Paesina where the veins look exactly like a ruined city is no easy task, because the pattern is hidden inside the rock and cannot be seen until you break it open. Outside of focusing on the areas around Florence where it is known to occur, finding a piece of ruin marble is just luck. And, if you do find a piece, by the time you’ve finished the cutting and polishing process the resulting stones tend to be fairly small; usually fitting in the palm of your hand. Nevertheless, Pietra Paesina is much in demand with collectors for everything from jewelry making to having a wondrous nature-created image displayed on a shelf. Depending on the complexity of the “scenes” within the rock, a palm-sized block of ruin marble, can be bought for anywhere between a hundred dollars to several thousands.



Scenes from a desert landscape. Photo credit: [50watts.com](https://www.50watts.com)





A quaint village viewed from the outskirts of town. Photo credit: [www.spiritrockshop.com](http://www.spiritrockshop.com)



The grey polluted skyline of the Victorian industrial revolution. (Photo: [Mirtio/Public Domain](#))

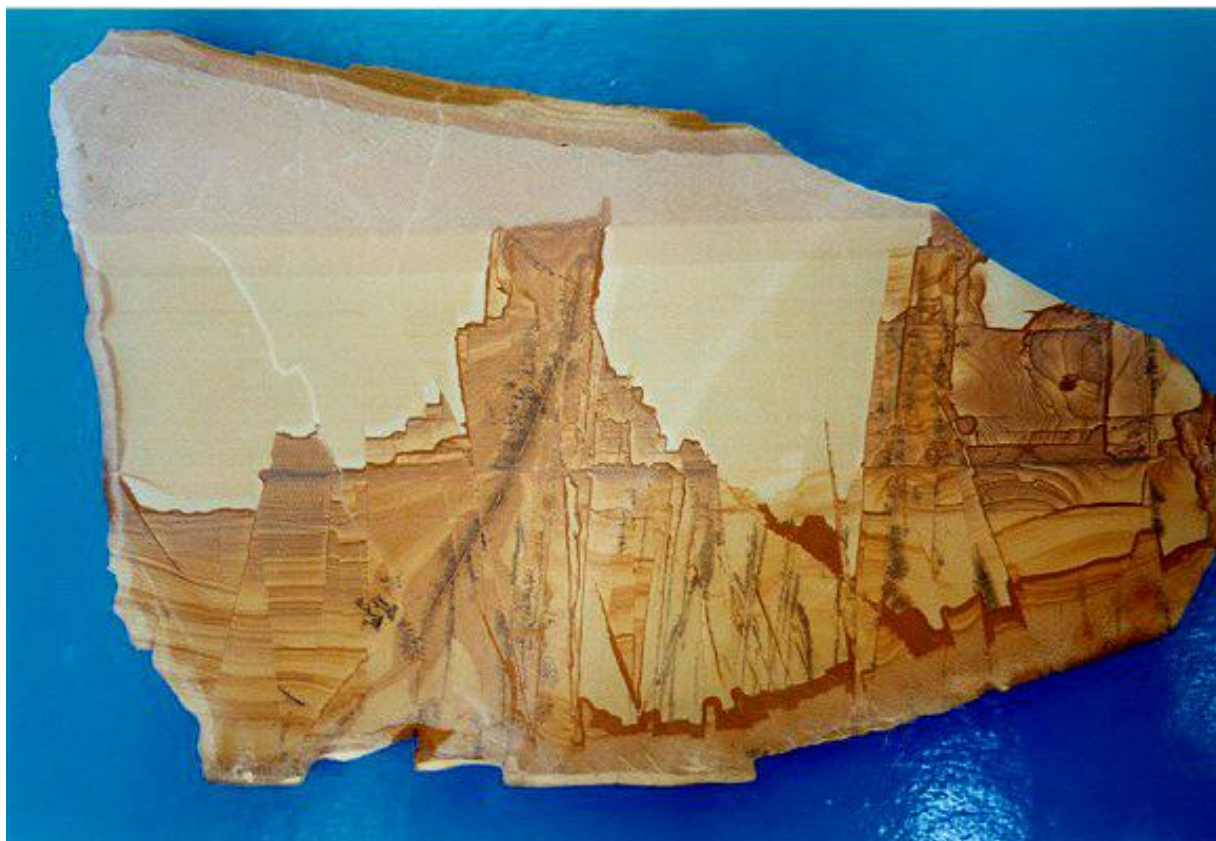


A verdant valley covered with fog. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>





A city in flames. Photo credit: [Sailko/Wikimedia](#)



An imposing citadel. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>



Coastal rock formations. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>



A boat-filled harbor. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>





An ocean. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>



A Chinese landscape. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>

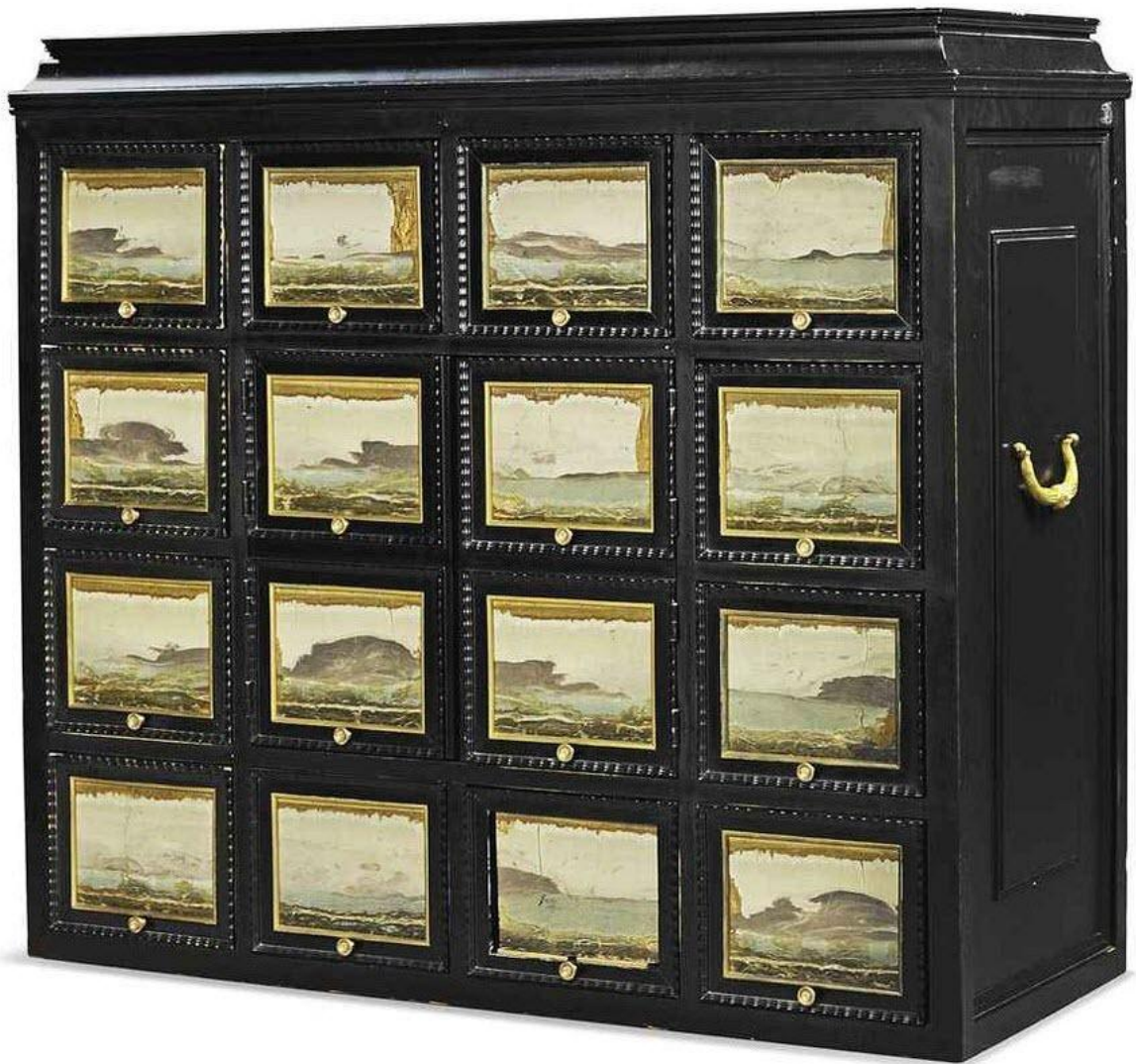


Framed composition. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>



Framed landscape. Source: <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/pin/256634878744175656/>





A 17th-18th century wooden cabinet embedded with block of ruin marble. Photo credit:  
[www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com)

Sources:

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