

The architecture
of fertility

14.02.21 - 15.08.21
Bureau Europa

Credits

Curator and spatial designer
Malkit Shoshan

Curator local context
Remco Beckers

Supervision
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Marketing
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Construction
Reinier van der Meer
Fran Hoebergen
Charlotte Koenen
Stefan Vontobel

Typeface
Elizabeth Ignota door Sriwhana Spong
en Sandra Kassenaar

**bureau
europa**

Platform
voor
architectuur
& design

Participating activists, artists and designers:

Atelier van Lieshout
Yael Bartana
Desirée Dolron
FAST
Rebecca Gomperts
Bernie Krause
Zacharias Kunuk & Ian Mauro
Next Nature Network
Tabita Rezaire
Diana Whitten

With thanks to

Barbara Beckers, Centre Céramique,
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Graduate School of Design, IBA Parkstad,
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Museum, Municipality of Simpelveld, Museum
de Schat van Simpelveld, National Museum
of Antiquities Leiden, Netherlands Society
of Abortion doctors, Netherlands Institute
for Sound and Vision, NTR, Jet Nuij, Andrea
Peeters, Regional Historic Centre Limburg,
Social Historic Centre Limburg, University of
Midwifery Education & Studies Maastricht,
Willem Velthoven, Vtape



Gemeente Maastricht

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ELEMENTS

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Timmerfabriek, Boschstraat 9, Maastricht

Welcome at Bureau Europa

This exhibition tells the story of architecture and the politics of fertility. The built environment may seem neutral, but on closer inspection, it is steeped in social attitudes and political statements. Fertility and the position of women are among the themes expressed in and influenced by urban surroundings.

The history of fertility, physical space and women is full of heroines, princesses, determined workers and women on the barricades. They freed up space to realize buildings and fought for righteousness to better regulate common-sense matters such as education, self-determination over one's body and a healthy work-life balance. But women's space was limited by the domestic role imposed on them and the reduced rights society allowed them.

We shall also consider the exhibition's titular flower and women's 'typical knowledge' of herbs and medicine. Knowledge that history has problematized for many reasons, including market competitiveness. But the positioning of women also relates to nature itself. A direct parallel to the female body's treatment is seen in the exploitation and destruction of nature, such as using synthetic growth hormones like DES to improve fertility in both women and livestock.

From social submission and a patriarchal economy to a daring revolt against the established order, women's emancipation has taken longer than we often realize. This exhibition explores how society has long sought to control women and their bodies and the solutions developed to overcome these problems.

Independent women's organizations have always existed, from the beguinages and nunneries, where women could attain more self-development than their contemporaries, to the ladies' abbeys for the most sought-after and worldly-wise women of their time, and the

factory workers whose strikes at the Sphinx factories inspired an entire country. It is not surprising that Maastricht is where Dutch women first exercised their right to vote.

A political battle is being fought in the Netherlands and world-wide, and debate is intensifying about women's medical treatment, healthcare, childcare provision and position in the workplace. Climate change and abortion laws are often at stake. Therefore, this exhibition takes you from the abortion clinic to the womb, from the courtroom to the farmers' field and the swamp, and features activists, policymakers, scientists, artists and designers.

We invited curator Malkit Shoshan (Harvard Graduate School of Architecture and Design) to present at Bureau Europa the 'Love in a Mist' research project and exhibition, first showed in the Fall of 2019 at Harvard Graduate School of Design. In Bureau Europa, co-curator Remco Beckers responds to the exhibition by adding elements from Limburg's region rich culture.

Enjoy the exhibition,

Floor van Spaendonck
Director Bureau Europa

Love-in-a-Mist (*Nigella damascena*)

From the buttercup family, is a purple flower whose black seeds are known for their benefits to the heart, liver and brain. In the past, the seeds were used to regulate fertility, induce contraction of the womb, and miscarriage.

Love in a Mist

Malkit Shoshan
Curatorial statement

'Love in a Mist – The architecture of fertility' explores several evolving narratives on the spaces and politics of fertility. It highlights society's quest to control women and nature, and the resulting environmental degradation, and brings together issues such as the historical use of synthetic hormones in women's bodies; measures to super-size farm animals and domesticate plants; and techniques to accelerate fertility and extract natural resources.

From the treatment of women's bodies to the exploitative human relationship with nature, 'Love in a Mist' examines spaces of fertility including abortion clinics, artificial wombs, court rooms, farmed landscapes, and swamps, as extrapolated from diverse accounts and imaginaries by scholars, activists, legislators, ecologists, biologists, artists, and designers.

The exhibition is installed inside four consecutive greenhouse structures under the titles: 'Reproductive Rights', 'Accelerated Growth', 'Extinction' and 'Compost'. Each greenhouse is populated by artworks, research papers and artifacts. Together, they extrapolate multiple narratives that can be read as "snapshots", capturing brief episodes in the long history of the politics and spaces of fertility.

1. Reproductive rights

From antiquity until the Renaissance, women cultivated a relationship with the natural world. The intimate knowledge of plants, medicinal herbs in particular, was passed down to enable future generations of women “to regulate fertility” and “function with some measure of independence in respect to reproduction” (John M. Riddle). From the 13th century on, however, women’s control over their bodies and reproductive knowledge has been increasingly criminalized. Women have been punished and terrorized, their bodies burned, and their teachings obliterated through church-led inquisitions and in civil courts. The pursuit to govern reproductive know-how and rights with impunity is an attack on practices of care, women’s rights, health, socio-economic freedom, and knowledge itself.

Today, new compounded efforts by pro-life activists to criminalize abortions and prevent women from having access to reproductive health care are being backed by national governments and state legislators. In the US, during Donald Trump’s presidency, Reproductive Rights have increasingly come under pressure. Conservative policies are taking hold in more countries. The US-led Geneva Consensus Declaration, signed in October 2020, also by European countries such as Poland, Hungary, and Belarus, appears dedicated to protecting women’s rights; yet, it denies the right of abortion. Abortions are still illegal today in 26 countries, including Suriname, the Philippines, Honduras, Nicaragua, and as of January 2021 in Poland. In 39 countries, it is only permitted when a woman’s life is at risk, such as in Brazil, Mexico, and Indonesia.

For some foundation, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 2542 in 1969, proclaiming the ‘Declaration on Social Progress and Human Rights’, which states: “All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education, and means to do so. The responsibility of couples and individuals in

the exercise of this right takes into account the needs of their living and future children, and their responsibilities toward the community.” In time the declaration has evolved to not only include the rights of couples but specifying the rights of women: “Women’s reproductive rights include the right to legal and safe abortion, the right to birth control, freedom from coerced sterilization and contraception; the right to access good-quality reproductive healthcare; and the right to education and access in order to make free and informed reproductive choices” (Amnesty International). Today, however, 7,000,000 women and girls are injured or disabled due to unsafe abortions yearly, and 22,000 women and girls die from unsafe abortions every year.

As long as abortions are criminalized, risking women’s health and freedom, the struggle for reproductive rights and women’s rights will continue.

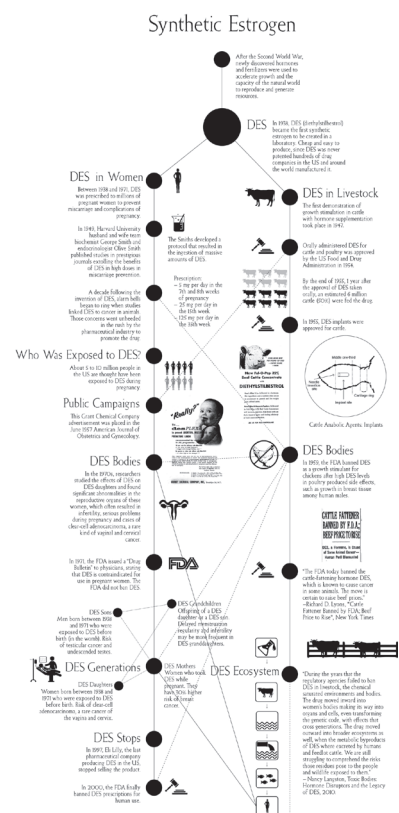


Because of COVID-19, abortion pills can now be delivered by drones in the UK. The drones of ‘Women on Web’ have already been doing this internationally for years.

2. Accelerated growth

During and after the World Wars, hormones and fertilizers were being developed to increase reproduction of resources and accelerate growth in the natural world. Diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic form of the hormone estrogen important to reproduction especially in women was discovered in 1938. Just a few years later doctors began prescribing it to pregnant women as a dietary supplement that could prevent pregnancy-related complications including miscarriage and premature labor. In 1947, Harvard University physician and biochemist George Smith and endocrinologist Olive Smith published studies linking the use of DES in high doses to miscarriage prevention. Their studies were used by drug company representatives to convince doctors to prescribe DES to pregnant women (DES Action USA). Three decades on, however, empirical studies linked the hormone directly to increased breast cancer among the over 4.8 million women prescribed DES, cervical and vaginal cancer in their daughters, and congenital disabilities and deformation in their children generally.

In 1971, the FDA issued a Drug Bulletin to physicians, stating that DES is contra-indicated for use by pregnant women. The FDA did not ban DES, but only urged doctors to stop prescribing it to their patients (DES Action USA). The Dutch Ministry of Health did not issue this advice until 1974. It took until 1975 for doctors to comply. The first six DES daughters in the Netherlands developed vaginal cancer at a young age and in 1986 filed a claim for damages with the Amsterdam court. Ten pharmaceutical companies were sued. It took ten years of litigation until manufacturers and insurers reached an agreement to pay the equivalent of 38 million euros into a fund to be set up in 2000: the DES Fund. This course of action has proved necessary because there is now a third generation affected by the original use of DES. The Netherlands has 200,000 DES grandsons born with congenital disabilities. The trauma caused by this drug is therefore far from over.



In the agricultural world meanwhile, DES was used as a growth hormone to improve the ratio of feed to desired weight in livestock. Its use in intensive livestock farming gradually led to the contamination of land, water, plants, and consequently also other living species (Anna Tsing and Paula Ebron). The use of DES in livestock farming also contributed to a radical transformation of the built environment. It inflated all the nodes along the supply chains of meat, milk, and egg production and consumption. Growth hormones exacerbated and scaled up farming’s industrialization over the years. It led to the swelling of carbon dioxide emissions and played a significant role in the environmental degradation and climate change.

3. Extinction

Nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history

1,000,000 species threatened with extinction

Loss of biodiversity is not only an environmental issue, but also a developmental, economic, security, social and moral issue

Nature can still be conserved, restored and used sustainably through transformative change—a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across technological, economic and social factors, including paradigms, goals and values

<p>The report makes five direct drivers of change to nature with the following sub-points in descending order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in land and sea use Direct exploitation of organisms Climate change Pollution Invasive alien species <p>Indirect drivers of change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased population Per capita consumption Technological innovation Constitution and accountability Resource extraction and production in one part of the world to satisfy the needs of distant consumers in other regions 	<p>In agriculture</p> <p>Promoting good agricultural and agroecological practices, multifunctional landscape planning, Green national integrated management, Climate engagement of all actors throughout the food system, Integrated landscape and territorial management, Conservation of the diversity of genes, varieties, cultivars, breeds, landraces and species, Enhance transparency and resilience through market transparency, Incentivize distribution and localisation, Reduced supply chains, Reduced food waste.</p> <p>In marine systems</p> <p>Ecosystem-based approaches to fisheries management, Spatial planning, Effective marine, Marine protected areas, Protecting and managing key marine biodiversity areas, Reducing on-land pollution into oceans, Working closely with producers and consumers.</p>	<p>In freshwater systems</p> <p>Inclusive water governance for collaborative water management and greater equity, Integration of water resource management and landscape planning across scales, Promoting practices to reduce soil erosion, sedimentation and pollution runoff, Inclusive water strategy, Promoting investment in water projects with clear sustainability criteria, Addressing the fragmentation of many freshwater policies.</p> <p>In urban areas</p> <p>Promotion of nature-based solutions, Increase access to urban services and a healthy urban environment for low-income communities, Increasing access to green spaces, Sustainable production and consumption and ecological connectivity within urban spaces, particularly with nature spaces.</p> <p>The report calls for the formulation of policies and actions with different value systems and diverse interests. The inclusion of full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Women in governance. The development of nature recovery. To practice biodiversity considerations across all key sectors.</p>
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The report offers a wide range of illustrative actions for sustainability and pathways for achieving them across and between sectors such as agriculture, forestry, marine systems, freshwater systems, urban areas, energy, finance and many others

Intergovernmental Science Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) Media Release, May, 2019

On May 6th, 2019, the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), released a report warning that nature is declining globally at rates unparalleled in human history. The pace of species extinction is accelerating, gravely impacting people across the world. The report recommends: – improving and strengthening practices of care between humans and the natural world; – recognizing the positive contributions of women and indigenous communities to the conservation and restoration of nature; – including indigenous peoples, women, and local communities in environmental governance; – incorporating indigenous wisdom, values, and technology into conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of land and resources.

Quotes from the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

4. Compost

The next part of the exhibition is a homage to Donna Haraway's "Children of Compost" fabulation and her plea to reimagine a different relation between humans, the Earth, and other living entities. The shared fate of human and non-human life on Earth in this time of environmental destruction and social injustice requires joining forces across disciplines, old wisdom and contemporary knowledge, cultures and species, to decenter the human and reimagine symbiotic living and sustainable and equitable futures.



Tabita Rezaire, 'Sugar Walls Teardom', video, 2016, 21:37 min

5. Space Makers in Limburg

By Remco Beckers

Female emancipation often only appears to play out on the world stage, but significant events and developments exist anytime and everywhere and thus also happen at the local level. Though of course even local women's history is terrifically grand and complex, this added, fifth chapter brings together a few of the most remarkable women who challenged their times and mores for the betterment of their fellow and of future women. They educated young girls or stood up for a better life for all; they ruled parts of the land to the best of their abilities and attained exceptional levels of personal development, worldly wisdom and refinement. They and others have served as inspirations to many.

One example is the enigmatic Lady of Sijpeveld, a Roman Domina buried in an exceptional sarcophagus. The interior relief indicates she was a prosperous landowner who played an important role in a male-dominated world. On the same level there are the aristocratic ladies who were only admitted when they could prove their wealth and nobility to the exclusive Abbey at Thorn: a convent where eligible ladies temporarily gave up their life of luxury and were educated to be the most cultured and sought-after women in Europe.



Women from more modest backgrounds have also had a major influence on their fellow humans' wellbeing. In the 19th century, the

Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus had a calling to take care of poor children and families. To be able to do so, the sisters practiced a handcraft with such diligence that they became exceptionally skilled and very cultured. The Limburg community's wellbeing was also paramount at the Vroedvrouwenschool (midwifery school), which was so well known in Limburg, it long defined the landscape of Heerlerbaan. The imposing complex, designed by architect Jan Stuyt, was founded on solid knowledge and the most modern and safest techniques. More than 80,000 Limburg children were born by Heerlen's midwives.



We should also note the female factory workers' resilience at the Regout family's potteries in Maastricht. They dared what their male colleagues did not and were the first women in the Netherlands to go on a large-scale strike for better working and living conditions. Their determination sparked a wave of strikes and inspired the suffragettes in their fight for women's suffrage. It should come then as little surprise that women in the Netherlands first exercised the right to vote in Maastricht's municipal elections. The first female councillor, Anna Wynandts-Louis, was elected in 1920.

Notes on the design

Atelier Van Lieshout was founded by the sculptor Joep van Lieshout in 1995 in Rotterdam. The company create and fabricate widely exhibited works. The name emphasizes the fact that although the sculptor founded and leads the studio, the work produced stems from the creative impulses of the entire team. Recurring themes in the work include self-sufficiency, power, politics, and the more classical contrast of life and death.

Yael Bartana is a video artist who explores the imagery of cultural identity. In her photographs, films, and installations Bartana critically investigates her native country Israel's struggle for identity. Her early work documents collective rituals introducing alienation effects such as slow-motion and sound. In her recent work the artist stages situations and introduces fictive moments into real existing narratives.

Remco Beckers is curator at Bureau Europa and alumnus of Maastricht University. At Bureau Europa Remco Beckers curated the following exhibitions: 'Unrealised. Never Built Maastricht' (2017), 'Stucco Storico, the story behind a craft' (2018) and co-curated 'Landscape as Cult. A changing view on our nature' (2019).

Desirée Dolron is a Dutch photographer who lives and works in Amsterdam. Her photographs portray a variety of styles and subjects and falls within several genres, from documentary and portraiture to still life and architecture.

Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST) is an Amsterdam- and New York-based think-tank that develops projects at the intersection of architecture, urban planning, design, and human rights.

Rebecca Gomperts is a qualified abortion specialist based in Amsterdam and founder of 'Women on Waves' and 'Women on Web', both of which provide reproductive health services for women who cannot access it in their own countries. In 2018, she founded Aid Access, which operates in the US. She is generally considered the first abortion rights activist to cross international borders and was featured for it in Time Magazine's 2020 list of the world's 100 most influential people.

Sandra Kassenaar is a graphic designer based in Amsterdam. She works closely with artists, curators, writers and architects. Sandra collaborates with the editors on making the design and craft magazine MacGuffin. Besides running her practice she teaches at ArtEZ in Arnhem.

Bernie Krause is an American musician and soundscape ecologist. In 1968, he founded Wild Sanctuary, an organization dedicated to the recording and archiving of natural soundscapes. Krause is an author, a bio-acoustician, a speaker, and natural sound artist who coined terms such as geophony, biophony, and anthropophony, and, as a founder of the field, was germane to the definition and structure of soundscape ecology. Krause holds a PhD in Creative (Sound) Arts with an internship in bioacoustics from Union Institute & University in Cincinnati.

Zacharias Kunuk is a Canadian director from the Inuk population. He is known for his productions that are entirely in the Inuktitut language. His film 'Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner' (2001) has been lauded as the all-time best Canadian film. Together with Ian Mauro, Kunuk founded the Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change Project.

Ian Mauro is an associate professor in the Geography Faculty of the University of Winnipeg, in Manitoba, Canada. He holds a BSc in Environmental Science, PhD in Geography, and studied as a Postdoctoral fellow in Ethnecology at the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. He is also a film director.

Next Nature Network is a collective of makers, thinkers, educators and supporters interested in the dialogue about our future. They approach the natural world in a new way where preservation is essential, but they also urge us to look ahead.

Tabita Rezaire is a French video artist, health-tech-politics practitioner, and Kemeti/Kundalini yoga teacher based in Cayenne, French Guyana. Her practices unearth the possibilities of decolonial healing through the politics of technology.

Malkit Shoshan is a researcher, designer and author. Her work is situated at the intersection of design and activism. She is the author and mapmaker of 'Atlas of the Conflict', 'Israel-Palestine' (2010). Her additional publications include: 'Village' (2014), 'Drone' (2016), 'Spaces of Conflict' (2016), 'Retreat' (2020), and 'BLUE: The Architecture of UN Peacekeeping Missions' (forthcoming, 2021). She is the founding director of the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST), and the Area Head of Art, Design, and the Public Domain (ADPD) MDes at Harvard GSD.

Diana Whitten is a New York-based documentary maker focusing on social justice. She develops media tools and documentaries that support the Ford Foundation International Fellowships program, of which she is communications director. 'Vessel' is her first documentary and received praise when released in 2014.

'Women on Waves' is a Dutch pro-choice nongovernmental organization (NGO) created in 1999 by Dutch physician Rebecca Gomperts, in order to bring reproductive health services, particularly non-surgical abortion services and education, to women in countries with restrictive abortion laws. 'Women on Web' is the online sister organization of 'Women on Waves'.

The exhibition 'Love in a Mist – the architecture of fertility' is spread throughout the building of Bureau Europa. In the entrance you can find 'Artificial Womb', an imaginative installation of organic spheres and futuristic bio-bags that challenges you to think about the role of women and men in future procreation, by Next Nature Network.

In the great hall, the exhibition continues in a series of greenhouses. The greenhouse is a space of nurture and control. In a greenhouse, one can manipulate climate and soil composition to regulate the fertility of seeds and plants. The greenhouse installation includes four consecutive structures, each is populated by art works and artifacts that correspond to the exhibition theme and focus areas: 'Reproductive Rights', 'Accelerated Growth', 'Extinction', and 'Compost'.

The 'Reproductive Rights', a covered greenhouse, houses 'Women on Waves' mobile treatment room, an initiative that aims at providing access to safe and legal abortions at sea. Its online sister organization 'Women on Web', which flies drones and sends abortion pills from women in one country to women in another, is shown alongside. The inclusion of Diana Whitten's film 'Vessel' provides an engaging history of 'Women on Wave' campaigns and activism. Next, the Foundation for Achieving Seamless Territory (FAST)'s wall diagram offers a historical overview of reproductive rights through a selection of global and local legislations and events.

The works within 'Accelerated Growth', a partly covered greenhouse, explore with a series of diagrams the genealogy of synthetic hormones and their impact on women, farmed animals, land, and bodies of water. The diagrams are followed by an inflatable installation, 'Bodies of Steroids'. Both designed by FAST. The last stands in parallel to Bernie Krause's famous field recordings of diminishing soundscapes in nature.

The 'Extinction' greenhouse begins with 'Uncertain (TX)' by Desirée Dolron, conveying the deterioration of Caddo Lake State Park, Texas. Bringing scientific backing to this claim is the UN's Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services report from May 2019. It presents empirical studies and data on diminishing biodiversity and mass extinction of species worldwide. The document, which also proposes actions across governments, cities, communities, and households, is situated next to an indigenous call for action: 'Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change.' A documentary film directed by Zacharias Kunuk.

The last greenhouse, 'Compost', weaves together speculative imaginaries by artists examining women's bodies, minds, and relations to the natural world from different perspectives – political, biological, spiritual. Yael Bartana's work 'What If Women Ruled the World?', "brings some of the world's best strategic minds together to help avert impending disaster while situated in a replica of Dr. Strangelove's War Room". Tabita Rezaire's video 'Sugar Walls Teardom' pays tribute to the imposed contribution of black womxn's wombs to medical science. The artist's treatment of their eternal healing power is shared in the next work, titled 'Womb'. The sculpture by Atelier Van Lieshout offers "a stylized representation of the interior of the human body, almost perfect anatomical renditions of the organs that keep us going". The final part of the installation is a film by Desirée Dolron titled 'Complex Systems', originally situated within the 'Compost' greenhouse, which can be seen in Bureau Europa's cinema. The film depicts a flock of birds scattered across the sky in a loop of ever-changing patterns and questions the relation between singular and shared intelligence, prompting issues concerning humanity, the psyche, and the possible presence of a collective unconscious.

The exhibition ends with a local chapter, 'Space Makers in Limburg', focusing on female agency space in our region over the past 2000 years. From the enigmatic Lady of Simpelveld, and her richly decorated sarcophagus, to the forgotten princesses of Thorn; from the Sisters of Huize Loreto, who reached the highest possible level in their craft, to the bold Sphinx women, whose strike gave an indispensable boost to feminism and women's suffrage in the Netherlands.

The graphic design for Love in a Mist is in the hands of Sandra Kassenaar. She developed the typeface Elizabeth Ignota in collaboration with artist Sriwhana Spong for the book 'H' (2018). Elizabeth Ignota brings the letters of medieval mystic Hildegard von Bingen's Lingua Ignota together with Elizabeth Friedlander's font Elizabeth-Antique. Friedlander is one of the first recognized female typedesigners, whose font was distributed worldwide by the Bauer Type Foundry, Frankfurt in 1933.

