

Structures and Mappings: Research as Narratives

Sara Nesteruk

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This visual research explores processes of mapping, structures, and form as content. A series of maps present processes of time, and research narratives, truths and fictions. From Tolstoy's use of the present in war and peace, slowing down time, and cinematic conventions, to T. S. Eliot's ideas of past, present and futures, in Four Quartets. Michail Bakhtin describes a sense of epic time, as a closed, historical past. This research presents research and journeys, as open forms, through poetry, music by Beethoven, and works by Samuel Beckett.

A visual essay presents nine images, including original works by the artist in relation to music, and my current project: Recipes for Baking Bread. Colour, forms, closed, and open truths,

#journeys

#mappings

#structures

#truths

#poetry

This visual essay investigates form, content and journeys. Through ideas by Tolstoy, Mikhail Bakhtin and T. S. Eliot, I explore mapping as a research practice and a process of exploration in PhD research. Tolstoy's sense of immediacy in *War and Peace*, in terms of language, constructs a sense of slowing down or speeding up the narrative. In the English translation by Louis and Aylmer Maude, the use of words brings the reader into the present moment:

They all grew silent. The stars, as if knowing that no one was looking at them, began to disport themselves in the dark sky: Now flaring up, now vanishing, now trembling, they were busy whispering something gladsome and mysterious to one another. (Tolstoy [1869] 2010, 1180)

This sense of physical distance and space and the immediacy of always being in a moment appear in my current project, *Recipes for Baking Bread*. In Figure 1, a starshot follows a period of blackness. By taking the Hollywood convention of a campfire scene, a point two-thirds of the way through a narrative, when the characters by tradition sit around a campfire before the B-plot kicks in, I am inverting this convention with the use of a black scene. Referring to Laurence Sterne's use of black in *Tristram Shandy* (Sterne [1759] 2000, 62), this represents a point of death and destruction in relation to stories from Ukraine in the 1930s. Bakhtin talks about the use of epic time, describing this as closed or complete in narrative structure (Bakhtin 1994, 16). This can also be shown in sculptural terms. In Rodin's *The Thinker*, a physical circle – a closed complete loop – appears in the form of the sculpture (Figure 2). According to Rainer Maria Rilke, this closedness creates its own surroundings and allows the viewer to experience themselves completely as a result of coming into contact with the work (Rilke 1986, 15). In poetry, T. S. Eliot describes past, present, future and the relationships between the three. In research practice, these parts can become indeterminable, as Eliot describes:

What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. (Eliot [1963] 2002, 208)

Physical mapping, plot and structure are described in Eisenstein's work *Towards a Theory of Montage*. Eisenstein describes the relationship between film practice and ancient Greek architecture. As Eisenstein describes it, the process of walking around a set of buildings in time and space can be compared to composing a shot-by-shot narrative in film (Eisenstein [1937] 1991, 60). Physical mapping and space appear in the literature. Georges Perec is an example of a writer who uses visual forms in his written materials. In his introduction to *Life a User's Manual*, Perec likens his process to one of a jigsaw maker: 'The role of the puzzle-maker is hard to define.' Perec (2003) described the work of the person completing the puzzle as one of linking up. In research practice, this organisation of space and time in structures and narratives can be where stories begin and end. Physical structures can also become a form of generating content. Oulipo poets created structures from which work emerged. According to Jacques Jouet, 'the constraint is the problem; the text the solution' (Jouet, in Perloff, 2010, 81). This can appear in musical structures, as Figure 6 illustrates. Music presents rhythm, space and time in its composition: looping narratives and stories that exist and change bar by bar, phrase by phrase. Canon in D is one example (Pachelbel, 2000). A repeating chord sequence demonstrates a narrative within which a story unfolds throughout the duration of the work. As in music, in theatre time space, character, plot and narrative all exist in written form. Samuel Beckett's scripts contain diagrams and instructions. These appear with mathematical precision, describing in detail each player's moves in time and read as Oulipo poetry:

1st series (as above): 1, 13, 134, 1342, 342, 42

2nd series: 2, 21, 214, 2143, 143, 43

3rd series: 3, 32, 321, 3214, 214, 14

4th series: 4, 43, 432, 4321, 321, 21

(Beckett 1984, 291)

Beethoven's Sonata No. 14 appears in Figure 8. This is a colour representation of notes in the opening sequence to the first movement. A note appears at the end of the fifth bar, breaking the structure and melody created in the first four bars. This note changes everything within the bar and all the bars preceding it. It appears and disappears, with the colour creating interesting visual maps (Beethoven, n.d.). Colour can be a method of form and structure within itself. Figure 9 shows an image from a pantone chart. This colour scheme is the basis for my current project, *Recipes for Baking Bread*, which explores stories from Holodomor in Ukraine in the early 1930s, where up to 7 million people died from starvation. Farms became collectives and people were short of bread. This colour scheme represents baking tones and ingredients for breadmaking. Structural form, as John Cage describes in *Silence* (Cage, [1949] 2011, 62), can exist in objects and in their absence. In *Composition and Process*, Cage created a lecture to follow his musical work *Music of Changes*. Created using chance from I-Ching, periods of silence appear. In structural terms, each line of his lecture represents 1 second, and each line of absence represents a pause during which music plays. Cage describes structure as 'the division of a whole into parts' (Cage [1958] 2011, 18). In research practice, this is a return to oneself.

Epilogue

At the end of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy wrote an epilogue in two parts. In his text, he explores the themes of his novel: if *War and Peace* is a novel, what history is and where truth and fiction meet (Tolstoy [1869] 2010, 1215–317). The research process is one of discovery. In a recent paper, 'Architectural Form and Motion Graphics', I present ideas about structural form in time, based on architectural practice. This includes investigating the use of the 25-frame wipe as a navigational device that transports viewers through time and space. As a structural map, this device has become a common form of filmic language (Nesteruk 2020, 117–28). In this

paper, I produced a series of maps visually mapping a proposed trip to Japan to present my work and to explore physical space, journeys, time and histories in graphic form (Figures 4 and 5).

On the page, a plan view looking down represents a specific organisation of events. Being in and existing within practice can present an alternative reality. David Shields, in his book *Reality Hunger*, explores truth and fiction.

I bear in my hands the disguise by which I conceal my life. A web of meaningless events, I dye it with the magic of my point of view. (Shields 2010, 141)

Shields's work constructs a narrative through the work of others. A map in itself. His visual form suggests a catalogue similar to the work of Walter Benjamin. An archive of thought in which truth and reality meet fiction and imagination is and can be a point of enquiry and departure. Meanings created through physical structure and time can appear in film and motion graphics practice. This is what Eisenstein described in his journeys around the Acropolis in Athens (Eisenstein [1937] 1991, 60). What is absent, as well as what is present, has an impact on conceptions of events. In Jared Pappas-Kelley's 2019 book *Solvent Form*, the author describes processes of deconstruction and loss to create meaning and art. '*The untangling and retangling of the moment that gives art its form*' (Pappas-Kelley 2019) – journeys in time and in space, exploring ideas.

Conclusion

In conclusion, illustrations provide examples of mapping and research practice in a variety of forms. Through Tolstoy's use of space, distance and time in his works to the sculptural forms explored by Rodin. Journeys in archives represent T. S. Eliot's ideas about beginnings and endings, where an investigation completes and emerges – the journey of a practitioner through and within their research.

Two maps of Japan and Tokyo present a planned view of physical space. (Figures 4 and 5). A journey of travel by the author includes maps of thought and fragments of ideas as a narrative emerges in time and in space. Three compositional diagrams in colour deconstruct musical practice with examples from *Pachelbel*, the hymn *Abide With Me* and Beethoven's 14th Sonata (Figures 6, 7 and 8). These images provide a visual map of chord sequences and notes in space and in time, identifying rhythm, structures and breaks in these structures. For example, in Beethoven's *Sonata No. 14*, presented in Figure 8, one note appears in the fifth bar to break the rhythms established in earlier bars. This note changes everything within an existing structure and appears and disappears throughout the work. In direct reference to my current project, *Recipes for Baking Bread*, these image sequences then become colour maps for time in space for a conceptual presentation of project ideas.

Acknowledgements

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Figure 1: Star Shot, *Recipes for Baking Bread* Film Still.

Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.



The Thicket
16 Aug 2020
10.31 am

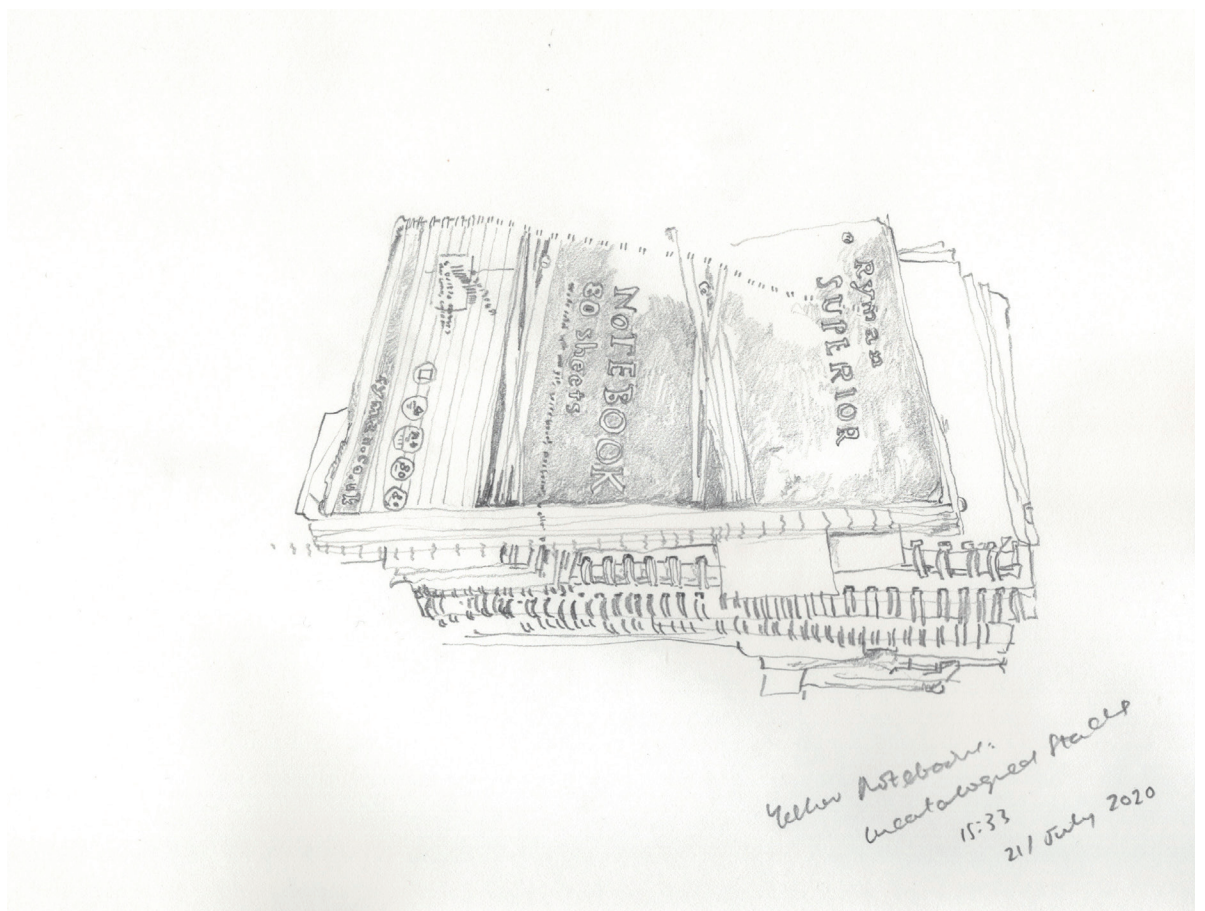


Figure 2 (opposite page): Drawing of *The Thinker*, by Rodin. Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.

Figure 3 (this page): Uncatalogued Stacks, books drawing. Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.

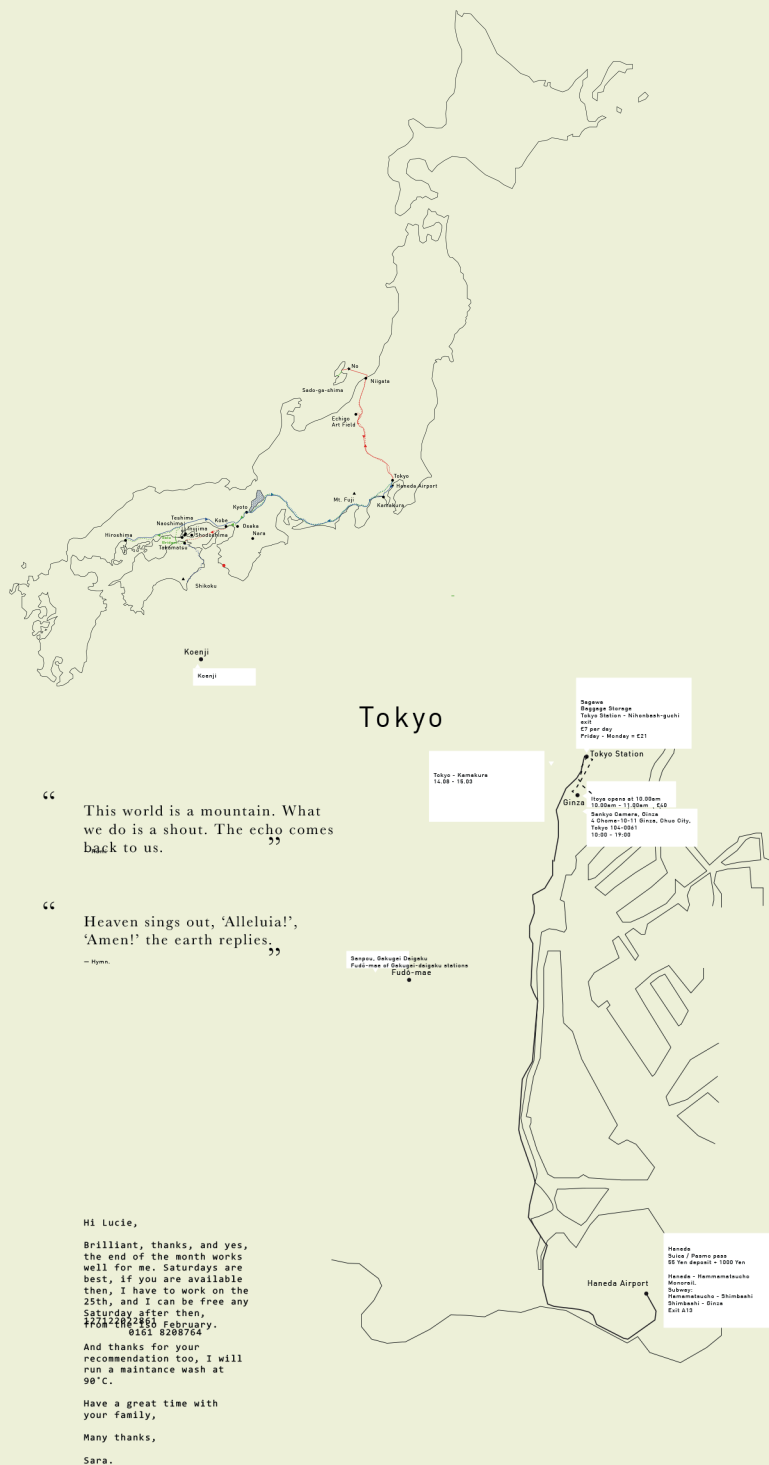


Figure 4 (top): Japan Map. Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.

Figure 5 (bottom): A2 Map of Tokyo. Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.

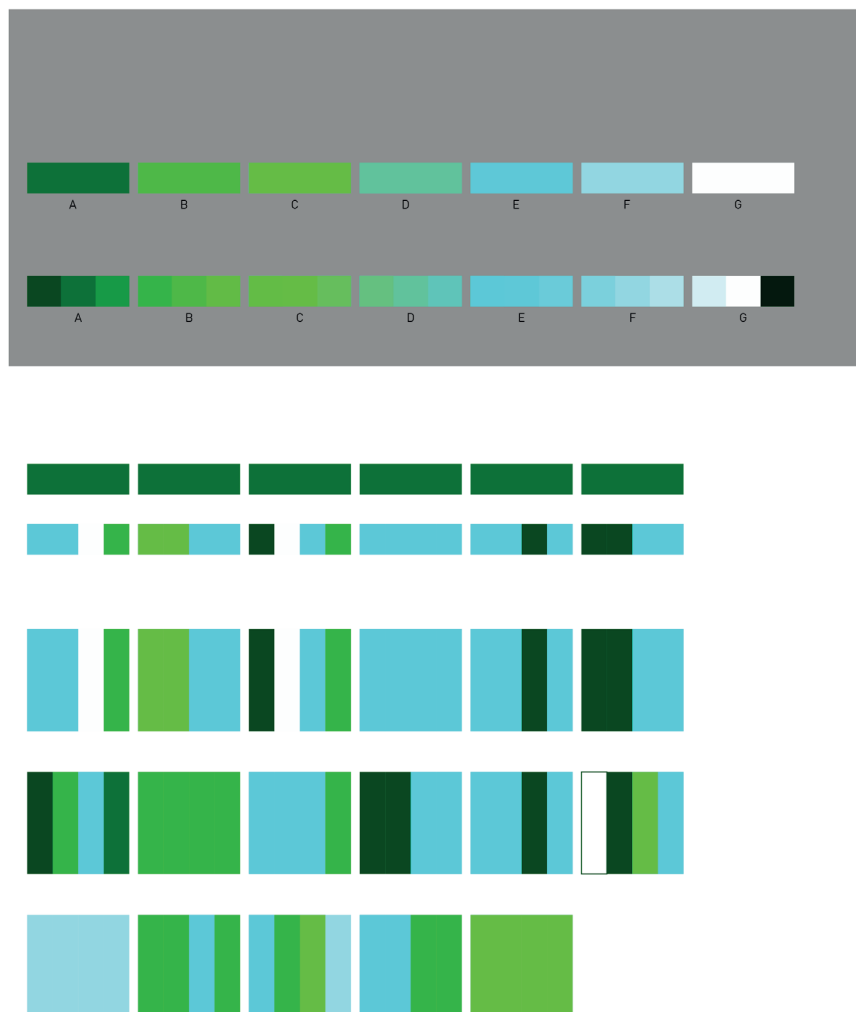


Figure 6. Canon in D, Chord mappings.

Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.

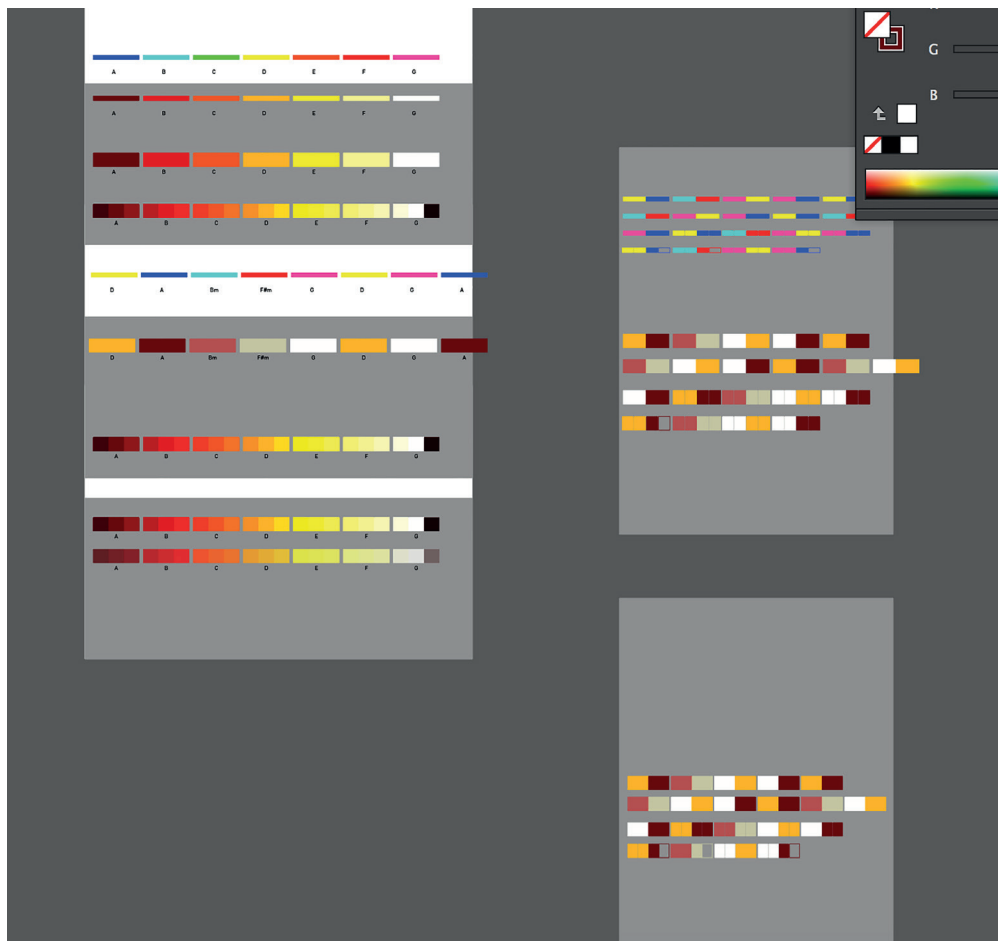


Figure 7. *Abide with Me* chord mappings.

Source: Sara Nesteruk .

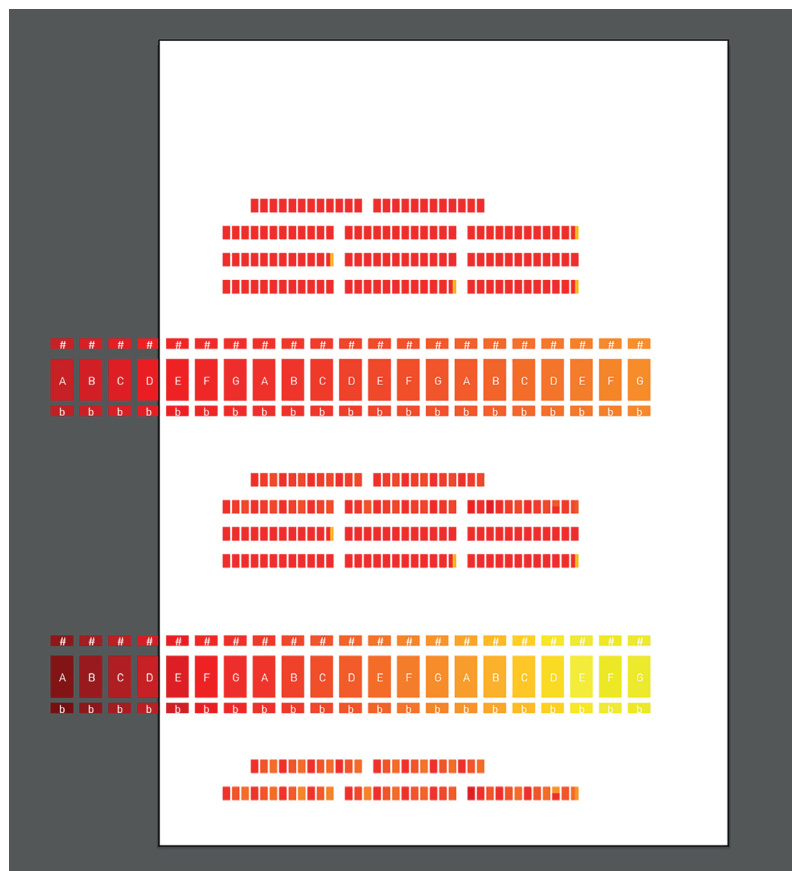


Figure 7 .Beethoven's Sonata No 14, Opening
Structures. *Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.*

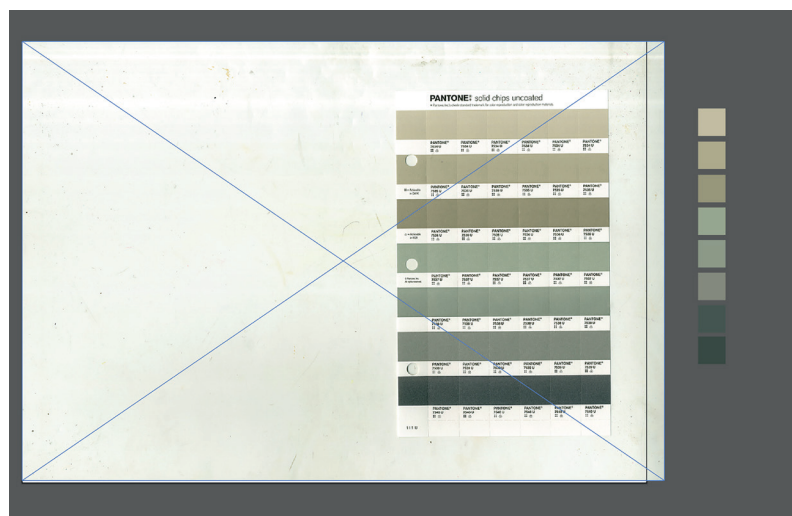


Figure 7 .Pantone Colours, Recipes for Baking-
Bread Colours. *Source: Sara Nesteruk, 2020.*

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Bio

Sara Nesteruk is a Senior Lecturer in Creative Digital Design at SODA, The School of Digital Arts at Manchester Metropolitan University. Sara's expertise includes graphic design, data visualisation and visual identity with a particular interest in digital histories from Ukraine. She directed *The Accident* (Channel 4, 2007); *Recipes for Baking Bread* (2021) and *90 Years from Holodomor* (in production). Awards for her work include Artists' International Development Award, Arts Council England 2017 and Best Experimental Short Film, Intershort Festival (2022).

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