



**Press release 7 July 2017**

## Chris Agnew announced as first winner of the Axisweb Artist Award 2017

Chris Agnew is the recipient of the first Axisweb Artist Award 2017. Chris will receive £1,000 and additional artistic support, including the production of an Artist film by Axisweb, to realise the ambitions of his project - Annex.

Chris's project Annex, seeks to unearth the lost history of a Romanian family, between the years of 1919 and 1989.

Chris lived in Bucharest, Romania between 2011 and 2016, where with a couple of friends he started a furniture restoration business. The story behind Annex started with the purchase of an antique writing desk that had seen better days. The gentleman who was selling the desk told Chris that one of the drawers was jammed shut, but that whatever it contained didn't interest him. Once back at the studio, Chris realised that the key had been snapped off in the lock of the drawer. After prising it open, the desk revealed a mass of letters, documents, certificates, photographs, and various other objects, including the leather case of a small pistol. The material spans the most tumultuous period in Romanian history; from just after the end of WW1 in 1919, right up until 1989, when the violent revolution brought about the end of Communism. All of these events are filtered through one family who lived in a small town 70 miles outside of Bucharest.

Chris has been tracking down the descendants of the family, which has only revealed even more unexpected stories than could have ever been anticipated.

This project intersects with Chris's artistic practice around how an individual accepts, processes and acts upon the information that they have been given and the space between reality and fantasy. Annex lies at the crossroads between social anthropology, investigative journalism, and contemporary art practice.

As the recipient of the Axisweb Artist Award, Chris Agnew commented:

*The scale and scope of this project is much larger, and has much wider reaching implications for both myself personally as an artist, and for the other 'characters' who play a role in this story. Annex has required me to fully immerse myself in another domain – that of the investigative journalist in Romania – and my value as a Western contemporary artist is under scrutiny in this environment. This is something that I have, and will continue to embrace throughout this process, as I ask myself questions about the role that a British artist can play in Brexit-era Europe.*

On Chris's application, Mark Smith, Executive Director commented:

*I was drawn to Chris's project because of the story. Annex offers honesty in place of sensation, self-searching in place of self-promotion, and a wonderful first-person account (through the eyes of Chris) of a journey of discovery.*

*The project gives insight into the process of the artist to investigate, construct, reconcile, reveal and present. The uncertainty and the tension of the unknown and the idea of authenticity and truth in revealing the story is something we all can relate to.*

On Chris's application, Sarah Martin, Axisweb Trustee and Head of Programme at Turner Contemporary commented:

*I am delighted that Chris Agnew has been awarded the first Axisweb Artist Award. The Award supports experimentation and is a unique opportunity for Axisweb members to evolve new work in an open ended way. I look forward to seeing how Chris Agnew's ambitious and far reaching project develops over the coming months with the support of Axisweb and other partners.*

On Chris's award, curator and gallerist Kristin Hjellegjerde commented:

*I am absolutely thrilled that Axisweb has decided to give the artist award to Chris Agnew, it is truly well deserved. Chris works with commitment and painstaking precision to expose narratives and challenge conventional artistic approaches to storytelling. Through rigorous experimentation, this project based work further deepens the unique nature of his practice*

**- Ends -**

For further information on the Axisweb Artist Award, please contact  
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## **Notes to Editors**

### **Chris Agnew biography**

Chris Agnew is a British artist known for his project based work, highly detailed drawings and icon panel etchings. He received his BA in Contemporary Art Practice from The University of Leeds in 2008, followed by a Masters in Fine Art at the Wimbledon College of Art in 2010. Agnew's work deals with the malleable nature of what we hold as 'truth', and how the presentation of information informs our subsequent understanding of events. Chris Agnew is represented by Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London.

More information see: <https://www.axisweb.org/p/chrisagnew>

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## **Axisweb**

An independent arts charity. We are committed to providing a platform to support artists and profile what they do in order to foster a more widely engaged and diverse community of artists, commissioners and audiences.

More information see: [www.axisweb.org](http://www.axisweb.org)

## **Axisweb Artist Awards**

An opportunity for Axisweb Members. This series of Awards aims to support our members in evolving new work, starting new projects and experimenting with new processes. We want to support artists as artists. It's not about defining outcomes, it's about space and time to challenge and allow the unplanned or unexpected to emerge.

Each Award offers a cash sum, a personalised support package, an artist film produced by Axisweb plus editorial and promotion through our website and social media platforms.

## **Social Media**

Twitter: [@axisweb](https://twitter.com/axisweb) / [@chrisagnewart](https://twitter.com/chrisagnewart)

Facebook: [axisweb.org](http://axisweb.org) / [chrisagnewart](https://www.facebook.com/chrisagnewart)

Instagram: [axisweb](https://www.instagram.com/axisweb) / [Chris Agnew](https://www.instagram.com/Chris_Agnew)

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