Anne Jackson Statement

My current project is entitled “**The Witchcraft Series**”, a sequence of wall-mounted works exploring the concept of witchcraft and witch-persecution in European history. I draw on the roots of woven tapestry as a mural art form and strong story-telling medium. The subject of witchcraft creates an intense metaphorical lens through which to reflect on various contemporary attitudes and social fears.

For my knotted tapestries, I often appropriate images and text from historic witch-trial accounts, and pamphlets detailing charges and accusations. I am interested in memorialising particular individuals, as with “**Ursula Kempe, St. Osyth, Essex, 1582**“ and “**Certaine Wytches, Chelmsford, Essex, 1566**“.

Witch-persecution exploded across Europe with the invention of the printing press, in a way that might be seen to parallel the effects of the modern tabloid press. Where possible, I reproduce the actual texts from those early printed sources, as in “**The enformation of Thomas Rabbett, of the age of viii yeres or thereabouts“.**

I find that the contemporary fear of science, especially biotechnology, has provided an interesting sidelight on “the witch-hunt”. There is a similar sense that unknown and uncontrollable forces are being deployed to harm us and our world. **“Alchemists**” pairs medieval alchemical symbols with formulae from cutting-edge biochemistry, including the personal symbol of an Elizabethan alchemist and the barcode ID of a contemporary biochemist.

Recently I have been researching “magical charms” used traditionally to protect livestock and rural households in the UK, as late as the early twentieth century. All the symbols, redrawn in my own hand, in the tapestry **“Sator, Arepo, Tenet, Opera, Rotas”,** were found sealed in glass bottles, beneath the floors of cow-barns in Wales and Somerset in the early twentieth century. I see them as demonstrating the human desire to exert control over uncontrollable aspects of life.