

RETHINKING WASTE - EVERY WHICH WAY WITH FRUIT & VEGETABLE NETS BAGS!



@suegascoyneart

INTRODUCING SUE GASCOYNE

Sue Gascoyne is an environmentally engaged artist who loves using textiles, clay, waste and biomaterials to create interactive installations and sculptures. Sue's sensory-rich art explores issues around equality, safety, identity and gender. A strong environmental ethic and investigations with materiality are central to her art.

Sue's art has been exhibited in over 20 exhibitions in the UK. Sue was a finalist for VAO25, selected for a Firstsite Collectors' Group Bursary Award in 2025 and a graduate from The Other MA (TOMA). Sue has been longlisted for The Artist Prize 2026. Sue has run numerous community arts workshops at galleries and festivals. A former child psychotherapist and mental health practitioner Sue continues to provide wellbeing-based arts workshops in her capacity as a Creative Health Practitioner and community artist.

Sue launched UNLEASHED brand of unique wearable art ties in 2026.

www.suegascoyneart.co.uk

[@unleashed.ties](https://www.unleashed.ties)

What started as a 'I wonder what I can do with fruit and vegetable net bags' thought one day has developed into something of a mission for me! ...



Obviously, the best-case scenario would be for this packaging to be replaced with eco alternatives like cotton netting, but in the meantime, I've made it my challenge seeing how many different ways I can use this material to bring about exciting and unexpected effects!

Here are some of the ways in which I have used the plastic netting from fruit and vegetable net bags in my artwork and workshops.

To create:

- New materials
- Sculptures
- Containers & wrapping objects
- Embellishments
- Bodily & blood-like effects
- Community & collaborative weaving projects
- Moulded forms
- Children's activities
- Festive decorations, broaches & cards
- Creating patterns & imprints

I'd love to hear your ideas and be inspired by how you've turned this waste into treasure.

Things to think about...



HOW EASY IS IT TO STITCH?

Although very light, plastic netting can be frustrating to stitch with a machine because:

- The netting frequently gets caught. &
- The machine jams as it is stitching 'air'.

WHAT CAN HELP?

- Going slowly to avoid the foot hooking the netting.
- Doing short stitch runs which minimise jamming.
- Stitching onto a base material to anchor the netting.
- Securing the netting to something stable like ribbon or macrame.
- Stitching yarn, ribbon or material over the netting.

More things to think about...

RIGID PLASTIC NET FEATURES - lies flat or can be made into shapes. Is easy to stitch. Does not flow or drape.



GOOD FOR...

Creating structural tubes and sculptures which hold their shape or have a sense of direction. Also good for flat embellishment, greetings cards, canvas for weaving & strong stretchy containers.

SOFT PLASTIC NETTING FEATURES – is activated by movement, is stretchy, flowing & versatile. Needs structure as hangs limp and can't support its weight.



GOOD FOR...

Creating flowing or draping sculptures/hangings, or for stretching and connecting with other materials or environments. It has an organic form and is easily distorted, changing its appearance through manipulation.

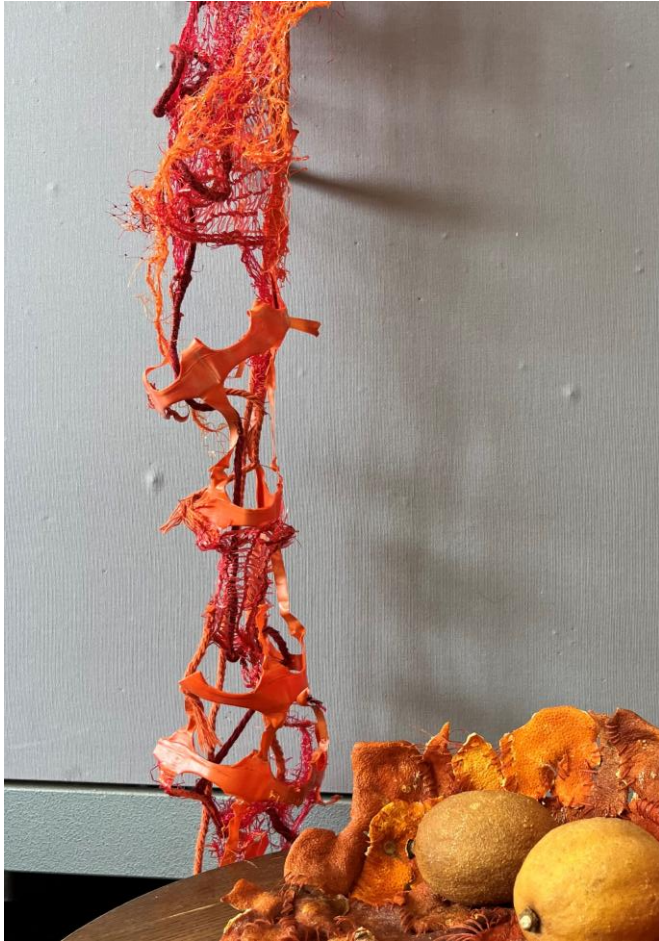
Creating New Material...



Think about...

- Affordances?
- Heavy or light?
- Activated by wind, movement or light?
- How do you want to use the material?
- How does this affect its qualities?

Combining Materials...



Think about...

- Different types of netting, construction and other waste.
- How to increase impact & versatility by combining with macrame or building netting for strength?
- Combining with unexpected objects.

Creating Sculptures...



Think about...

- Colour – here I consciously chose a restricted colour palette.
- Variety of netting for interest.
- Strength & shape.
- Shadows – how to amplify?

Creating Containers & Wrapping Objects...



Think about...

- The colour & size of the net bag.
- Is strength important?
- How to secure the container, if needed?

Veronica Ryan's recent exhibition at Whitechapel Gallery featured several netted containers. (images of Veronica Ryan's work – Sue Gascoyne, 2026)

Creating Bodily & Blood-like Effects...



Think about...

- The colour of the netting.
- Which 'weave' will work best?
- Does it need distorting, stretching, layering or bunching together?

Creating Embellishments...



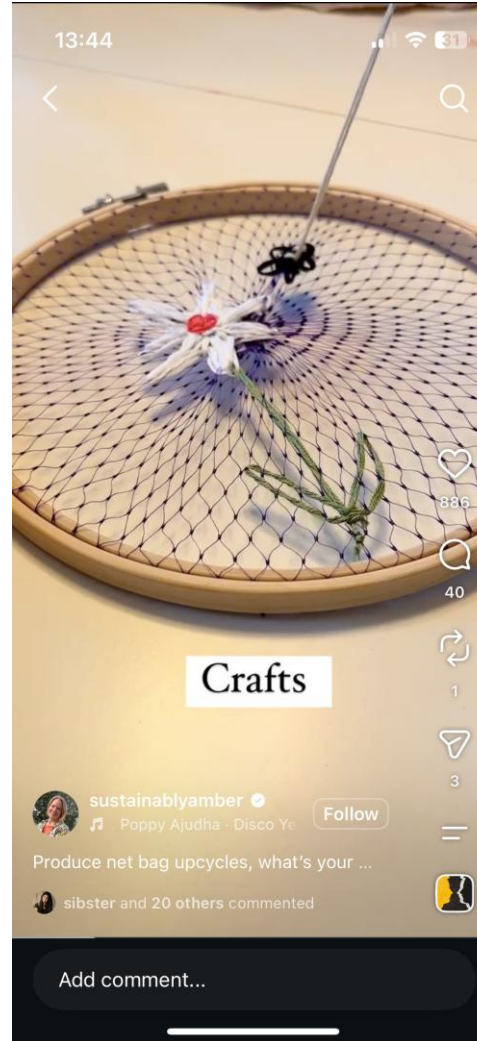
Think about...

- The colour & size of the netting weave.
- Whether accentuated by stitch or dye?
- Does it need distorting, stretching, unravelling or bunching together?

Creating Community & Collaborative Weaving Projects...



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Think about...

- What types of netting can be used in different ways?
- How the netting can be used by different ages.
- Which 'weave' size of netting will work best for wild weaving?
- Does it need distorting, stretching, layering or bunching together?
- Is having a theme helpful?

Idea posted by Sustainablyamber

@unleashed.ties

Thinking outside the box...



I Know Your Face (2022), Melissa Emerson

In my opinion this beautiful piece of art is so successful because:

- The use of netting is entirely fitting in terms of texture, opacity and appearance.
- The face is exquisitely embroidered in great detail which contrasts with the emptier and freer netting element.
- The image is surrounded by negative space.
- The piece has an interesting composition with the netting off-centre.
- The affordances of the netting have been maximised in terms of transparency and fraying edges.

Creating Moulded Forms...



Think about...

- What to use to set the netting?
- Is it OK to have dried glue or wallpaper paste visible?
- What will hold its shape?
- Works best with cotton netting rather than plastic.
- What sorts of shapes will hold best?
- How long will be needed to set?
- How to get the mould out without ruining the sculpture?

Children's Activities...



Think about...

- How different aged children can use the netting?
- What, if anything do they need to support their creativity?

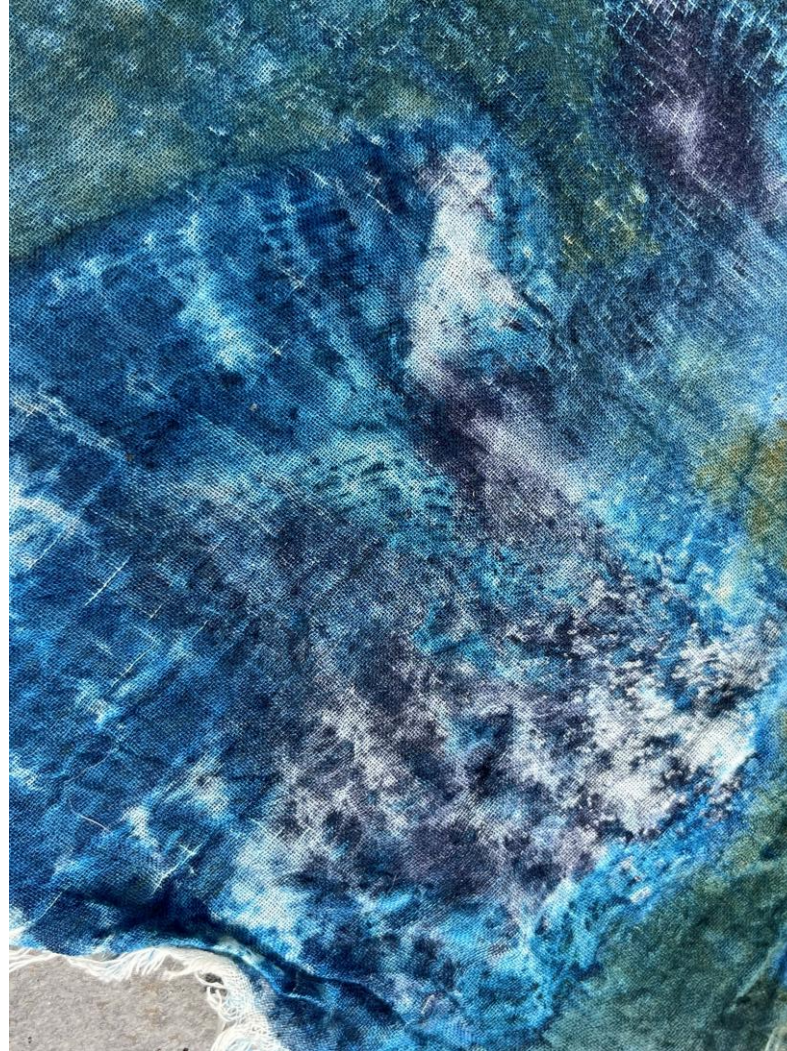
Creating Festive Decorations/Broaches/Cards...



Think about...

- What colour(s) to use? Toning or contrasting?
- Whether to layer the result?
- Whether to stitch by hand?
- How to make it easy to machine stitch? Eg sandwiching the netting in a paper or fabric frame.

Creating Patterns & Imprints on Card & Textiles...



Think about...

- How can you use the net patterns to create prints or imprints?
- Cyanotype, mono printing on card or textiles.

Creating Patterns & Imprints on Clay & Biomaterials...



Think about...

- How can you use the netting to create prints or imprints on clay?
- What impacts do different types of netting have?
- Best ways of getting print, eg, rolling pin or roller bed?
- Explore how the netting can be used to create textured biomaterials by pouring liquid onto the netting.

Finally...



I'd love to hear how you're turning waste into treasure and whether this presentation inspires you to have a go at trying something new.

Please contact me for information about my art, workshops or unique UNLEASHED ties.

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