

2004

## Growth

Lori Penn

*Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses)



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Penn, Lori, "Growth" (2004). *LSU Master's Theses*. 4038.  
[https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool\\_theses/4038](https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/gradschool_theses/4038)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Master's Theses by an authorized graduate school editor of LSU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [gradetd@lsu.edu](mailto:gradetd@lsu.edu).

# **GROWTH**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by  
Lori Penn  
B.A., Georgia College & State University, 2001  
August, 2004

## **Acknowledgments**

I am very grateful for my family and friends who have given me constant support .Many thanks to Kimberly Arp, Leslie Koptcho, Michael Crespo, Robert Hausey, Dr. Kirstin Noreen, Alison Frank, Christopher Hutson, Ryan O'Malley, Joshua Spahr, Lee Simmons, and Mathew Bourgeois for their honesty and encouragement. I also want to express my gratitude to Josh Lubin and his family.

## Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	ii
LIST OF IMAGES .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
GROWTH .....	1
IMAGES .....	6
VITA .....	12

## List of Images

1. <i>Grief</i> (intaglio).....	6
2. <i>Let Go</i> (lithograph).....	7
3. <i>Take It Back</i> (linocut, lithograph).....	8
4. <i>Lemur Dreamer</i> (intaglio).....	9
5. <i>Thoughts</i> (acrylic, color pencil).....	10
6. <i>Panic</i> (acrylic, color pencil).....	11

## **Abstract**

Every living being encounters growth. As humans, our experiences help to shape our mental and emotional development. Each of these experiences provides an opportunity for growth. In my work, apes, monkeys, and lemurs serve as visual metaphors for human growth. The body of work that I created for my thesis project reflects different emotions and experiences that facilitate growth and maturity.

## **Growth**

Growth is an inevitable part of life. Our experiences and our reactions to them help to mold and define our mental and emotional development. Our life experiences also help to facilitate our growth and maturity. We begin to develop a heightened sense of awareness as we progressively advance and grow from our experiences. Each learning experience along with a willingness to change offers an opportunity for growth. These growing experiences help us to discover our character strengths and defects and improve our quality of life.

Many obstacles in life can hinder our capacity for growth. As humans, our desire for material possessions and superficial attachments can complicate our definitions of personal growth and success, which is why I look to apes, monkeys, and lemurs for the inspiration of my subject matter. The apes, monkeys, and lemurs represent an ideal and untainted form of humanity because they are void of superficial attachments and the desire to attain material objects. The apes, lemurs, and monkeys serve as visual metaphors for human growth and development at its purest form. Because these primates do not try to define themselves by the objects they own, they represent the full potential of growth.

The primates are placed in scenes along with abstract forms which are appropriated from images of fossils, vegetation, anatomy, and outer space. The abstract forms reinforce the theme of the print they inhabit and create a more dramatic and emotionally charged atmosphere. While the abstract forms are not dominant, they play an equally important role in my imagery. The abstract forms echo the primates' feeling or experience which helps to add to the intensity of the image.

In my work, I analyze growth and the experiences that facilitate growth. I draw the

content for my work from my personal experiences, but I portray the images in a universal manner. A large portion of my work is inspired from adversities and challenges that I have faced, which have contributed to my growth and maturity. While I draw from my personal experiences for inspiration, the themes presented represent a broad spectrum of experiences that affect most people at some point in their lives.

The etching titled “Grief” reflects an emotion that every person will suffer from in his or her lifetime. The etching depicts an adolescent chimpanzee lying on his or her side on a bed of leaves, and he or she is overwhelmed by sadness. The dark background creates a depressing and somber atmosphere. The top of the print is dark and heavy, which creates the oppressive and overwhelming feeling of a giant and suffocating weight. When experiencing grief, it seems that the feeling will be permanent. However, the pain eventually subsides, and we can move forward. Grief is an overwhelming process, but one must first go through the pain before he or she can recover.

The concept of acceptance is another theme that I explore in my work. The color lithograph titled “Let Go” deals with the idea of letting go of the illusion of control. The chimpanzee releasing the spiny, ball-shaped form represents the feeling of a giant weight being lifted off his or her shoulders. The physical release of the spiny form is symbolic of letting go of the illusion of control. The spiny, ball-shaped form represents fears and worries. Sometimes we assume control over situations in which we are completely powerless. It is only after a reality check or an ego deflation that we are aware that we are assuming responsibility for situations which are out of our control. We burden ourselves with unnecessary worries, fears, and anxieties about people, places, and situations. It is only after practicing acceptance that we are



calm and relaxed.

In response to “Let Go,” I created another print called “Take It Back.” This linocut and lithograph contain the same subject matter as “Let Go.” However, the chimpanzee is peering over a ledge looking to retrieve the spiny, ball-shaped form rather than letting it go. While the pain from unnecessary fears and worries motivates us to relinquish the illusion of control, it seems that we are eager to “take it back” after a brief interlude of serenity.

The pursuits of dreams and aspirations also contribute to our developmental growth. Dreams and aspirations also distinguish humans from other primates. The awareness of our mortality motivates us to fulfill our ambitions before our time runs out. The color etching titled “Lemur Dreamer” represents our goals and ambitions. The print portrays a sleeping lemur perched on a branch. Abstract forms, representing dreams, are emanating from the lemur’s body. The abstract forms and the vibrant colors provide a surreal and dreamlike landscape for the sleeping lemur. While attempting to achieve our goals, it is common to encounter many learning and growing experiences. By working through obstacles that hinder or delay achieving goals, we develop strength and character.

Times of thoughtful reflection are also vital to human development and maturity. The acrylic and color pencil piece titled “Thoughts” portrays the theme of reflection. A chimpanzee in a contemplative pose is located at the bottom of the image. There are abstract forms, which represent thoughts, floating around the chimpanzee’s head. Quiet times of reflection are not meant for dwelling on the past, but rather to think about moving forward. Regretting past mistakes is counterproductive to the process of growth. Instead, the past should be used as a resource to avoid repeating the same mistakes. This image is about reflection, meditation, and

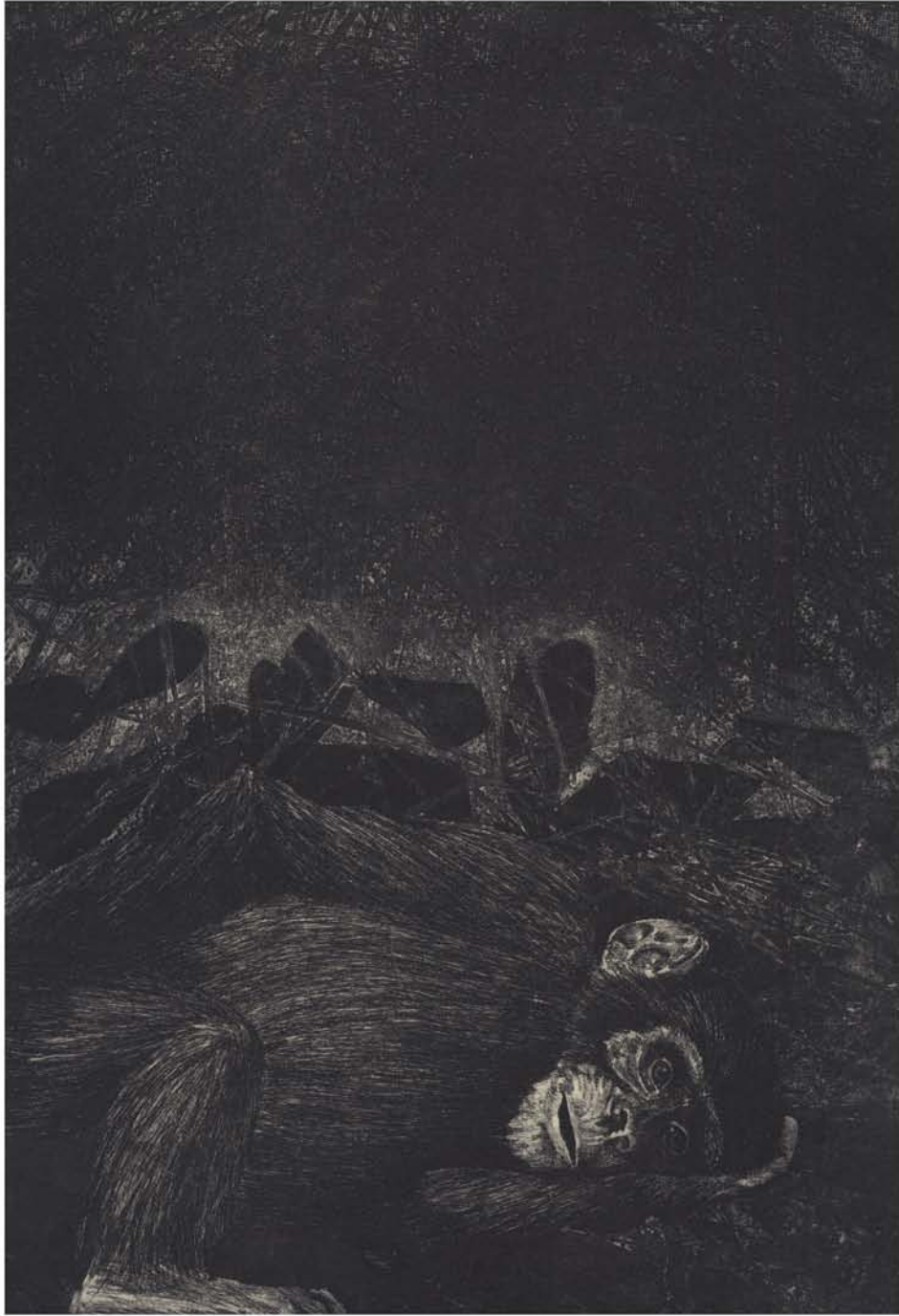
learning how to use creative energy to live in the moment.

Fear is another theme that I have explored in my work. I created the acrylic and color pencil piece titled “Panic” to represent this feeling. Fears and anxieties can dominate a person’s life. Although we find that most of our fears and worries are unfounded and irrational, they still have an overwhelming power over us. These fears can prohibit us from achieving our goals and ambitions and can render us completely useless. In this piece I depicted fear and panic through a screaming baboon and an irritated and infected, stomach-shaped form. The screaming baboon represents the frustrations of being debilitated by fear. The irritated and infected stomach-shaped form represents the sickening and nervous feeling in the gut that is often associated with fear. The use of red and the sheer rawness of the piece reinforces the anxiety of the image. After facing fears and realizing that many of them are trivial, one can grow from them.

I am motivated to create images based on the concept of growth because I confront this issue on a daily basis. Whether I am alone or interacting with others, I am always provided with an opportunity for growth. When I am willing to change and learn from my experiences, I am capable of growing. I have addressed many situations in my work that either cause or result from growth. The apes, monkeys, and lemurs along with the abstract forms deal with the emotion and the intensity of each growing experience. While my own experiences inspired the content of the work, it was very important for me to portray the images in a manner in which every person can relate.

My goal was to incorporate the kind of raw emotion and intensity in my work that I am not capable of describing with words. I used compositional arrangements and facial expressions to convey the emotions of the works, while I used colors and abstract forms to bring intensity to

the images. I am hoping that when people view the works, they will be able to relate to them and consider how the process of growth affects our everyday life.



*Grief* (intaglio)



*Let Go* (lithograph)



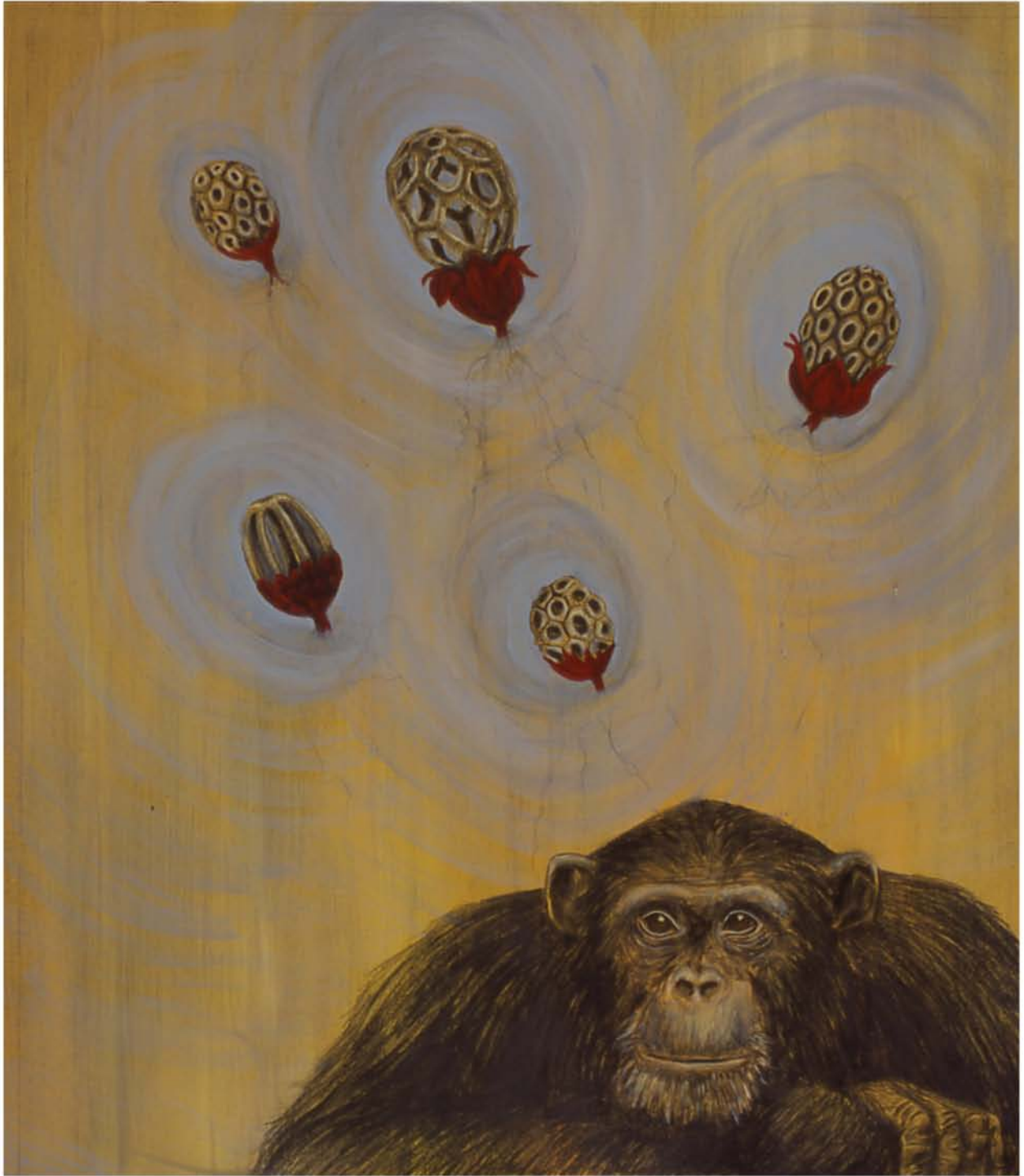


*Take It Back* (linocut, lithograph)



*Lemur Dreamer* (intaglio)





*Thoughts* (acrylic, color pencil)





*Panic* (acrylic, color pencil)

## **Vita**

Lori Penn was born in Lawrenceville, Georgia, in 1978. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Georgia College & State University in May of 2001. She will earn a Master of Fine Arts degree from Louisiana State University in August 2004.