PLATE I
Thismia americana
Phyllostachys nigra
Wild Turkey MELEAGRIS GALLOPAVO Linn. Male

PENELOPE GOTTLIEB (b. 1952)
Phyllostachys nigra (IAS)
acrylic and ink over John James Audubon print
38 x 25 1/2 in.
2017

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After receiving her BFA from the Art Center College for Design in Pasadena, Penelope Gottlieb went on to earn her MFA from the University of California in Santa Barbara where she currently lives and works. Gottlieb's artistic repertoire is thoroughly modern and includes innovative paintings as well as compelling media design, for which she received an Emmy in the field of motion picture title design in 1993.

Gottlieb's more recent works showcase a unique synthesis of her modern graphic design background and the vintage botanical renderings of natural scientists. However, her paintings are also unique in their perspective on the traditional floral still life. Stylized flora and fauna are depicted as emanating from a comic book explosion, illustrating what the artist refers to as "the dire state of the planet" as faced with species extinction and the resulting biological and ecological ramifications. These violent representations of the artistically typified placid natural world are intended as "visual eulogies for lost plant life." The particular specimens that Gottlieb depicts are in fact extinct and she is able to recreate them only from historical drawings and botanist's descriptions.

Although avant-garde and aesthetically unique, Gottlieb's paintings delineate clear influences from the renowned artists of Pop and Expressionist art. The composition of many of her paintings is reminiscent of Kandinsky's canvas-filling outpours while her bold color palette and black outlines recall Lichtenstein's comic book panels. Her work is also closely related to a more contemporary group of artists, including Alexis Rockman, Rachel Berwick, and Mark Dion, whose pieces also illustrate a coalescence of art and science. Gottlieb's paintings ultimately serve as acknowledgments of brutally lost nature, but simultaneously capture the power of the imagination and a hope for renewal.

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