

## ANDREW PURCHIN

*A Bird Celebration, 2013*  
oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in



courtesy the artist

## RUY BELO

# A Few Sentences with Birds and Trees that the Poet Rounds Off with a Reference to the Heart

Birds are born from treetops  
The trees I see bear birds instead of fruit  
Birds are the liveliest fruit of the trees  
Birds begin where trees end  
Birds make trees sing  
Reaching the birds trees thicken begin to move  
leave the vegetable kingdom to join the animal kingdom  
Like birds leaves settle on the earth  
as autumn descends upon the fields  
I'd like to say that birds emanate from trees  
but I'll leave that way of speaking to the novelist  
it's complicated and doesn't go well in poetry  
it hasn't yet been separated from philosophy  
I love trees especially those that produce birds  
Who is it who hangs them on those branches?  
Whose hand is it, whose uncounted hand?  
I pass by and have a change of heart

—Translated from the Portuguese by Alexis Levitin

**Ruy Belo**, who died prematurely in 1978, published eleven collections of poetry, four collections of critical writings, and numerous translations of writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, Blaise Cendrars, Federico García Lorca, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Belo's work has appeared in over thirty anthologies in Portugal, as well as in collections published in France, Spain, Italy, Serbia, Germany, Sweden, Latvia, Bulgaria, Holland, Mexico, and, of course, Brazil. Recent translations of his work have appeared in or are about to appear in *International Poetry Review*, *Metamorphoses*, *Per Contra*, and *Saranac Review*.

**Alexis Levitin's** translations have appeared in well over 200 magazines, including *Grand Street*, *Kenyon Review*, *Partisan Review*, *APR*, *New Letters*, and *Prairie Schooner*. His thirty-two books of translations include Clarice Lispector's *Soulstorm* and Eugenio de Andrade's *Forbidden Words*, both from New Directions.