

## CARLA CRAWFORD

*Soleil*, 2014  
Oil on Linen, 15 x 16 in



COURTESY WINFIELD GALLERY

## AHMAD SHAMLOU

### Collective Love

Tears are a mystery  
Smiles a mystery  
Love a mystery  
The tears of that night were the smile of my love

I am not a tale to be told  
Not a song to be sung  
Not a sound to be heard  
Or something that you can see  
Or something that you can know  
I am Common Pain  
Cry me out!

The tree speaks with the woods  
The weed with the fields  
The star with the galaxy  
And I speak with you  
Tell me your name  
Give me your hand  
Speak to me your words  
Give me your heart  
I have discovered your depths  
And spoken for all through your lips  
And your hands are familiar with mine

I have wept in blazing solitude with you  
For the sake of the living  
And have sung the most beautiful of songs  
In the darkest of graveyards  
For the dead of this year  
Were the most loving of the living

Give me your hands  
Your hands know me  
You found-at-last I speak with you  
As the cloud with the storm  
The weed with the fields  
The rain with the sea  
The bird with spring  
And the tree that speaks with the woods  
For I have discovered your depths  
For my voice is  
Intimate with yours.

—Translated from the Persian by Niloufar Talebi

**Ahmad Shamlou** (1925–2000) was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1984. Shamlou, also known under his pen name, A. Bamdad, is among the most influential Iranian literary voices of the twentieth century, and widely known as the father of modern Iranian poetry. He published more than seventy books, including poetry, fiction, short stories, children's books, essays, translations, and several volumes of his encyclopedia of Iranian folklore, *Book of Alley*. Shamlou.org

**Niloufar Talebi** is a writer, librettist, award-winning translator, and theater artist. She is the editor/translator of *Belonging: New Poetry by Iranians Around the World* (North Atlantic Books, 2008), and librettist of *Atash Sorushan (Fire Angels)* and *Epiphany* (BAM Next Wave Festival). She is a resident artist with the American Lyric Theater and with the Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center. Ahmad Shamou visited her parents' literary salons at her childhood home in Tehran when she was coming of age; these salons shaped her life and work. NiloufarTalebi.com.