



John Lyman, *The Artist's Father*, 1922,
oil on canvas, 10 x 81.2 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Canadian painter John Lyman (1886–1967) became a central figure in the development of Quebec modern art following his return to Montreal in 1931. He not only founded the Contemporary Arts Society in 1939 but also was an art educator and theorist. During his studies in Paris, Lyman was drawn to the figurative and portrait works of contemporary French painters such as Henri Matisse (1869–1954), particularly their definition of light and shade using blocks

of colour. Lyman focused on the formal elements of his compositions, especially colour and line, eliminating any anecdotal features that might distract from the modernist style of his works. *The Artist's Father* shows Lyman's father dressed in a comfortable suit, reading pensively in a yellow armchair. This depiction captures a formal yet intimate moment. The light illuminating the figure against a black background signifies the subject's intellect. The artist captures the gentle disposition of his father by rendering his facial features and the creases of his well-worn suit with great delicacy. Located at the top left corner of the piece are Latin characters and Roman numerals meaning "at the age of seventy-two," while the year below indicates when the painting was produced.

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