



John Lyman, *Habiba (Young Tunisian Girl)*, ca. 1922,  
oil on canvas, 54.6 x 45.8 cm, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

Due to the negative reception of his work in his native country, American-born Canadian artist John Lyman (1886–1967) moved abroad in 1913 and spent the next two decades living in France, Spain and North Africa. One of his primary influences was Henri Matisse (1869–1954), whose academy he attended in 1909. Lyman eventually travelled to Tunisia, where he painted *Habiba*

*(Young Tunisian Girl)* (ca. 1922). During this time, he painted several landscapes and cityscapes, with much attention to rooftops. This portrait is one of two head portraits of this girl; the other, also held by the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, is entitled *Study for "Habiba, Tunisian Girl"* (1920) and is the drawing upon which this painting is based. This exotic figure is striking due to her sculptural construction. The veil covering the girl's head is depicted in an almost three-dimensional way, taking her out of the context of a two-dimensional space and into the viewer's own space.

Alexandra Boucklos