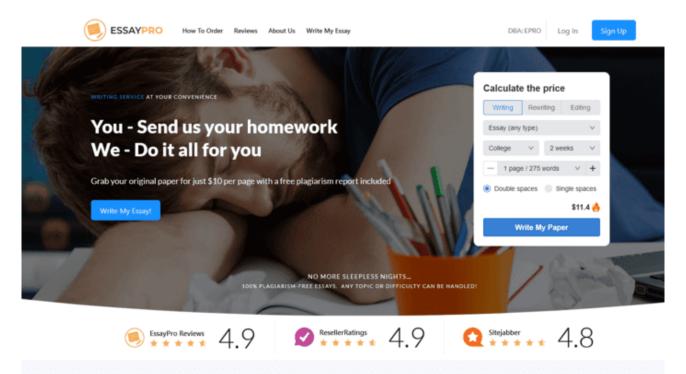
Small Country Farm at Bordighera



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French, 1840-1926

Small Country Farm at Bordighera

1884

Museum Purchase, 1943.39

In January 1884 Monet set out alone for the Mediterranean village of Bordighera, just across the Franco-Italian border. Originally intending to stay only for three weeks, Monet became so absorbed in the challenges of capturing brilliant hues of the lush landscape (so different from the cool, gray tonality of northern France) that he spent over two months there and produced forty paintings. Monet recorded his progress and frustrations in copious letters to friends back in Paris: "These palms are driving me crazy; the motifs are extremely difficult to seize, to put on canvas; it's so bushy everywhere, although delightful to the eye.... I would like to do orange and lemon trees silhouetted against the blue sea but cannot find them as I would like."

Small Country Farm at Bordighera was probably painted in March and represents his finest achievement there. Years later Monet mentioned it with one other painting of the sojourn as a work with which he was especially satisfied. In it, Monet used remarkably varied brushwork to create a wide range of optical effects and to organize his pictorial space as the viewer's eye is carried from the thick, bushy vegetation of the foreground to the hazy mountain peaks of the distance. Above all, the painting is remarkable for its bold handling of color and rainbowlike palette, which point away from the years of classic Impressionism to the color-saturated paintings of Monet's final decades in Giverny.

Monet often represented the times of the day when light is at its most dramatic: <u>sunrise</u>, midday and sunset. In such views as Cap Martin, near Menton (1884), Monet contrasts the intense light of the southern sun burning bright on the coastal road against the deep <u>calm</u> blue waters of the <u>Mediterranean</u>. In other pictures of olive groves and olive trees he focuses on the volley between light and shadow

Monet's pictorial style is the quintessence of Impressionism -- an investigation of the transformational properties of light. Emile Zola, the 19th-century French novelist and critic, wrote that Impressionism is a perception of the world "through a temperament." A scrupulous observer of light and color, Monet could define what he was feeling with loose brushwork and

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