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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_  
name of related multiple property listing N/A

### Location

street & number 932 HAVERSTRAW ROAD  
city or town SUFFERN  
state NEW YORK code NY county ROCKLAND code 087 zip code 10901

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national     statewide     local

Signature of certifying official/Title R. Daniel Murbey Date 11/10/2019

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government DSYPO

In my opinion, the property     meets     does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:  
X entered in the National Register     determined eligible for the National Register  
    determined not eligible for the National Register     removed from the National Register  
    other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 12/23/2019

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
3	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

TRANSPORTATION: road-related

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional (art studio)

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

RECREATION & CULTURE: museum/art gallery

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: STONE

roof: ASPHALT

other: GLASS, WOOD, METAL

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

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**Narrative Description**

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**Summary Paragraph**

The Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio, along with its historically related ancillary features, is located on Haverstraw Road (U.S. Route 202) in the Suffern area of Rockland County, New York. The building, which served as the house and studio of Pousette-Dart between 1959 and 1992, was originally erected ca. 1916 as the carriage house and chauffeur's quarters of Valley Head Farm, a large country estate developed in the early twentieth century by Henry Potter McKenney, a successful New York City commission merchant. In 1959 the parcel that included the carriage house and gardener's shed was purchased by Pousette-Dart, who lived there with his family and worked there from that point until his death in 1992. The boundary was drawn to include the parcel purchased by Pousette-Dart in 1959. The former carriage house is a commodious building of load-bearing stone construction that exhibits character-defining features of the Arts & Crafts and Neoclassical styles popular during that era; inside, it combines spaces originally reserved for the storage of motorized vehicles with domestic spaces that were used by McKenney's service staff and later by the Pousette-Dart family. The artist's studio is located on the second floor, in a large open area on the south side of the plan; the balance of that floor is largely given over to domestic quarters. The large studio space remains much as Pousette-Dart himself knew it and worked in it, complete with various works of art, art supplies and other materials used by the artist during his occupancy. In addition to the Pousette-Dart house and studio, the property additionally contains other features, including a stone gardener's cottage with an attached greenhouse, concrete-walled raised planting beds, a decorative urn, and a well. The immediate setting retains a high degree of physical integrity and continues to convey historic-period condition, notwithstanding the development of the property to the immediate north into an educational facility. It remains a relatively remote but readily accessible rural property traversed by the Mahwah River, and it is bounded to the west by thick deciduous woods and the Ramapo Mountains. Following H.P. McKenney's death in 1940, the estate that he developed was subdivided and sold; many of its historic components outside of the Pousette-Dart property nevertheless remain, although now under multiple ownership. The nominated property now partially serves the needs of the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation and remains under the ownership of the Pousette-Dart family.

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**Narrative Description**

*Location & Setting*

The Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio and its associated land and ancillary features are located at 932 Haverstraw Road—U.S. Route 202—a short distance east of the Harriman State Park boundary, in the Wesley Hills vicinity of the Town of Ramapo, Rockland County, New York. The nominated 2.14-acre parcel, which is L-shaped, is situated on the west side of Haverstraw Road; it is accessed via a private driveway that extends westwards from the main road and leads into the property. The property is secluded and nestled along the east bank of the

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

Mahwah River, a tributary of the Ramapo River, in sight of a stone dam and water impoundment located a short distance to the north, beyond the property boundary. The Pousette-Dart House and Studio—a former carriage barn constructed ca. 1916 as part of a larger estate property of the McKenney family known as Valley Head Farm—is oriented with its principal elevation facing westwards, though tending to the northwest, towards the Mahwah River. The grade of the nominated property is uneven; it slopes steeply downwards from east to west towards the center of the site, in the vicinity of the gardener's cottage and greenhouse, and then slopes upwards towards the western property line. The house/studio is situated on a flat shoulder of land above the Mahwah River, with two principal entrances providing access to the interior: the main entrance is located on the west side of the house while a second entrance is present on the north side elevation. Both are reached via the driveway, which, after entering the property, swings northwards directly in front of the house's west elevation; from it a concrete landing leads to the principal entrance, which is covered by a roof extension that is supported by decorative wood corbels bearing on stone impostes. From the driveway there is also a paved walkway that leads around the corner to the side entrance on the house's north side, via a concrete landing with steps and iron railings. At the rear of the house, to the southeast, is the stone gardener's cottage with attached greenhouse. A large lawn with concrete raised planting beds and a variety of mature deciduous trees surround the main house and lead up the greenhouse.

Beyond the lawn area that extends in a southeasterly direction towards the cottage and greenhouse, the remainder of the site is heavily wooded, a circumstance that provides the house/studio and its immediate surroundings with a distinct sense of seclusion in keeping with period conditions. The construction of a large religious school to the immediate north of the nominated property constitutes the only notable encroachment upon the resource's otherwise wooded and serene natural environment, which shares salient and direct associations with the artist's work.

*Grounds Overview & Orientation*

The Pousette-Dart House & Studio, the roof ridge of which is aligned on a northeast-to-southwest axis, is bordered by a manicured lawn that is more expansive on the building's east and south sides. Decorative plantings align with portions of the building's perimeter, particularly on the north, east, and south elevations; works of sculpture, including those set on wood plinths and located in front of the house's west elevation, provide a measure of artistic embellishment. A small circular patio is located adjacent to the building's southwest corner. The gardeners' cottage with attached greenhouse is located on the southeast side of the house/studio, where the manicured lawn transitions into woods. The lawn to the south of the house slopes downwards to a decorative urn set within a rounded masonry perimeter, to the west of which, in the direction of the driveway, are two concrete-walled planting beds, one situated higher than the other. The perimeter around the property's domestic core is bordered by dense

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

woods, an integral aspect of the property's character and setting, and a source of direct inspiration for much of Pousette-Dart's oeuvre during his occupancy. A short distance north of the property (outside the boundary) is a stone dam and impoundment on the Mahwah River, which flows southwards from that point along the property's western boundary, just beyond and west of the driveway. The wooded area of the Pousette-Dart property forms a segment of an extensive wooded tract that follows the course of the Mahwah River and the Route 202 corridor in this vicinity, and it thus relates to a larger and important wildlife corridor.

The nomination boundary includes a total of five contributing resources. There are two contributing buildings, the house/studio and gardener's cottage/greenhouse, both of which date to McKenney's development of his estate. Additional resources include the concrete-walled raised planting beds (contributing structure); the decorative urn with masonry perimeter (contributing structure), and a well (contributing structure).

*The Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio: Overview*

The Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio is a large story-and-a-half building with a medium-pitched (8/12) end-gable roof. It is a load-bearing masonry and concrete construct with wood and steel internal framing; it was erected above a rectangular-shaped footprint and a partially excavated basement, with a roof sustained by a series of wood trusses with wood decking and asphalt shingles. The principal west-facing elevation is five-bays wide; the north elevation is three-bays-deep; the east elevation five-bays wide; and the south elevation three-bays deep. The exterior of the building looks much as it did when it was constructed as a carriage house ca. 1916 for the Henry P. McKenney estate; it is characterized by its rustic stone envelope, deeply projecting eaves, and stylistic elements drawn variously from Arts & Crafts and Neoclassical sources. The generally self-contained form of the building is enlivened at the roofline by wall dormers, low ridge vents, and a large rustic stone chimney, and additionally by the projecting hood that shields the principal entrance on the west facade. Windows are both square-headed and segmentally arched and were conceived as single, paired and tripartite units; there are additionally two prominent Palladian windows, one located on each of the building's gable ends, which are set within arched recesses. The window sash is all original and of six-over-six, divided-light wood construction. The only alteration to the original ca. 1916 fenestration scheme was the addition of three skylights, which are located as a band on the west-facing roof pitch and correspond in placement with the entrance bay. The house's footprint measures roughly 68 by 38 feet, the shorter dimension corresponding with the narrower gable ends. Inside, the first floor consists of six principal rooms in addition to an entrance foyer, a bathroom, and closet space; some of that space was historically used for the storage of horse-drawn and motorized vehicles. The upper floor is largely given over to Pousette-Dart's art studio, which occupies the south side of the plan, with the balance of the space consisting of three

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

bedrooms, a cross hall with staircase, a bathroom and closet space, those features located on the north side of the plan.

*Exterior*

The west elevation of the building serves as the principal one and will be described first. First-story fenestration consists of four segmentally arched windows, three located north of the entrance bay and the other one to the south of it. Those windows are fitted with paired six-over-six wood sash divided by a wide flat mullion; the window heads are segmentally arched and spanned by stone voussoirs, and the sills are concrete. The windows have corresponding exterior storm windows, as most of the house's windows do. The entrance on this elevation is set within a broad, recessed bay and is shielded by a projecting hood, the roof of which forms a continuation of the main roof's slope, and the lower portion of which is hipped and a small area of which, on the north and south sides, is shingled. The entrance hood is sustained by large wood corbels that are footed on stone imposts that project from corresponding stone piers; it has a molded wood cornice and an associated gutter with copper downspout. Set within the broad bay are hinged outer doors, which are glazed with six-over-two panes; those doors conceal two interior doors, which are large glazed-and-paneled sliding doors, each of which has two fixed six-light upper panels below which are two vertically oriented and recessed panels with bead-board. An electric lighting fixture is suspended from the ceiling of the hood.

The building's stone walls were laid up in irregular courses with undressed field stone and are terminated by a molded wood cornice, which is interrupted at three points by shed-roofed wall dormers with concrete sills. Two of the dormers flank the portion of the roof that corresponds with the entrance hood, and each of those has paired six-over-six wood sash divided by a wide mullion; there is additionally a third dormer of this type, though consisting of three six-over-six windows, located between the first and second first-story windows moving south to north. A band of three skylights, positioned in relation to the entrance hood, are present approximately halfway between the eaves and roof ridge. Copper gutters with downspouts align with the eaves, though they are interrupted by the breaks in the cornice where the dormers are positioned. Centered on the roof ridge are two low gable-roofed vents, aligned with their roof ridges parallel to that of the principal roof's ridge. Asphalt shingles form the roof surface.

The north elevation is symmetrically composed and three bays wide. Centered at first-story level is a second entrance to the building, which is of more conventional nature than the large sliding doors located on the principal west elevation. That entrance has a glazed-and-paneled exterior door set within a simply paneled surround and it is recessed from the remainder of the wall plane; it is approached by means of a concrete stoop with iron railing and a concrete threshold. Flanking the door to either side are windows with segmentally arched heads and paired six-

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

over-six sash divided by a broad mullion. Corresponding with the second story is a Palladian window, which is centered above the door and set within a shallow recessed arch; six-over-six wood-sash windows are positioned to either side of the Palladian motif. In addition to the doors and windows described, there is a narrow casement window positioned in the gable field, immediately below the apex. The opposite south elevation generally mirrors the north elevation, excepting the absence of the entrance door and associated railing and concrete deck.

The east elevation is the most utilitarian of the four and is five bays wide with a clear line of demarcation, in the stonework, between the basement foundation wall and the main portion of the building above. A steel bulkhead door and a small window with a rectangular-shaped concrete lintel are located on the north part of the foundation wall, towards the northeast corner, and correspond with that area of the basement that is fully excavated.

Corresponding with the first story are a total of five windows. The southernmost three windows match the characteristics of the large windows on the opposite west elevation, while the two remaining ones, positioned in relation to the basement door and window, are single units hung with six-over-six sash; all have segmentally arched heads with stone voussoirs and concrete sills. As with the west elevation, three evenly spaced wall dormers with shed roofs interrupt the wood cornice; these match the characteristics and positions of those on the opposite elevation. Rising from the lower portion of the roof slope and offset in terms of its relation to the east elevation's center point is a large rustic stone chimney, which tapers upwards as it rises, and which is capped by terra cotta chimney pots. Three downspouts convey water from gutters to grade.

*Interior Plan & Finish*

The interior of the Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio originally served two purposes at the time it was built ca. 1916 as a component of the McKenney estate; portions of the first and upper-story level, on the north side of the plan, were dedicated to the domestic needs of McKenney's service staff, while the balance, on the south side of the plan, was given over to vehicular and related storage needs. The first floor contains an entrance foyer off of the north entrance, a bathroom, a kitchen, a dining room, a living room, and the parlor/piano room; they, along with the staircase to the upper level, represent the portion of first floor that served as the needs of the chauffeur and family. The portion of the first floor that originally served as a carriage house contains two rooms: the vehicular storage area, which communicates with large sliding doors and which functions as contemporary storage space, and an area that was later converted into a recording studio for the artist's son, Jon Pousette-Dart, an accomplished musician, using space from the former. The upper level, which is reached by means of the staircase positioned in the foyer, leads to an east-west cross hall astride of which, on the north side, are three bedrooms, and at the east end of which is a bathroom. On the opposite side of the hallway is the artist's large studio, which consists of 1,465 square-feet of space. There is additionally a small unfinished area of basement, located on the north side of the

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

plan. The building has steam heating with the piping for the system exposed and connected to iron radiators mounted along the interior walls.

Interior finishes are characterized by relative modesty, which reflects the building's early history as a mixed-use domestic and storage building for McKenney's estate, and the informal character of which proved well suited to the tastes of the Pousette-Dart family. In many areas the framing sustaining the upper floor—consisting of heavy sawn wood joists which bear on the stone walls, interior partitions, and a steel I-beam in the vehicular area—is exposed. In some areas, such as on the north side of the first floor, the framing and underside of the diagonally laid floorboards were painted; in other areas they were not painted and instead have a deep stained finish. The interior of the stone bearing walls were rendered with smooth plaster and painted; the windows have a deep stone reveal and lack corresponding trim, and the sash, frames and mullions are stained.

The parlor/piano room, located on the northwest side of plan, exhibits characteristic first-floor finishes for the area of that level that accommodated domestic functions. The floor is laid with hardwood strip flooring while the walls are finished with smooth plaster, painted white. The ceiling surface consists of expressed joists, closely spaced and stained, and diagonally-laid floorboards, also stained, and thus matching the finish of the large west and north-facing windows. On the opposite site of the plan, in the southwest corner, is a part of the interior that was reserved for vehicular storage. The preeminent character-defining feature of that space are two large track-mounted doors that allowed for vehicles to move in and out of their storage bay. Each door is four paneled; the lower panels are fitted with vertical narrow bead-board while the upper panels each have a fixed six-light sash.

The staircase that provides vertical communication between the two living levels rises in a southerly direction before turning ninety degrees to the west to complete its rise. The lower portion of the staircase is of the open-stringer type, while the upper portion is enclosed. The rise of the lower portion of the stair, opposite the wall, has a molded handrail and corresponding turned balusters; a balustered handrail of the same type aligns with the open well in the upstairs cross hall.

The studio is a largely unfinished space; while its historic use is not specifically known, it presumably functioned in some measure as storage space. The wood rafters and corresponding collar ties that sustain the building's roof are exposed, as is the rough wood planking to which the shingling was applied outside, and which is painted. The stone wall on the south gable end is exposed within the studio, with the south-facing Palladian window and flanking smaller windows providing for the admission of natural light from that direction; the recessed arch within which the Palladian window is set is plastered, in contrast to the rough stone and mortar expanse of the adjacent wall.



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

Additional natural lighting is provided by the three skylights, which face westward; these were added by the artist to provide for additional nature light. The floor is laid with hardwood strip flooring that shows considerable wear and dripped paint. The studio today continues to reflect its historic occupancy by Pousette-Dart. Racks accommodate canvasses, while tables, cabinets and desks brim with ephemera and are cluttered with art supplies, sculptures, and objects of interest to the artist. This space conveys the impression that the artist has temporarily stepped away, only to return momentarily.

*Gardener's Cottage & Greenhouse (contributing building), ca. 1916*

This feature consists of two attached but distinctive sections, a single-story stone section, the rustic architectural character of which comports with the former carriage house, and an attached greenhouse, which extends to the south and which is currently in a semi-ruinous state. Both have rectangular-shaped footprints, with that of the greenhouse being particularly elongated. The principal elevation of the cottage, which has an end-gable roof, is that which faces west; it is two bays wide, with dual glazed-and-paneled wood doors set within segmental-arched openings providing access to the interior. Each door has two lower panels with six-light glazing above. The northernmost of the two doors is shielded by a pent-roofed hood that forms a continuation of the main roof and which echoes that employed on the main building; the hood bears on wood framing with corresponding stone corbels. The cottage has a concrete foundation, a rustic stone chimney and asphalt-shingle roof. Extending from that section is the greenhouse, which has low stone walls with a window band above; the roof was formed by a steel framework that received glazing, most all of which has fallen away or been broken. The perimeter stone wall of the greenhouse is broken on the south side, allowing for access to the interior from grade via a flight of three steps.

There are, in addition to the main house and gardener's cottage & greenhouse, three additional resources. Those are a *concrete-walled raised planting bed*, ca. 1916, consisting of two distinctive but related sections (contributing structure); a *decorative cast-iron urn*, which is set within a circular motif formed of brick, ca. 1916 (contributing structure); and a *well* (contributing structure).

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

Name of Property

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**ART**

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**Period of Significance**

1959- 1992

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**Significant Dates**

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**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Pousette-Dart, Richard

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**Cultural Affiliation**

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**Architect/Builder**

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The cited period of significance, 1959-1992, reflects Richard Pousette-Dart's occupancy of the nominated property.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

The period of significance extends to 1992 to reflect Pousette-Dart's occupancy; as such Criteria Consideration G has been cited.

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

The renowned first-generation American Abstract Expressionist painter, Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-1992), lived and worked for over 30 years in a converted carriage barn on the outskirts of Suffern, Rockland County, New York. There Pousette-Dart resided with his immediate family and worked in a dedicated studio space where he produced the paintings, drawings, sculptures and photographs that brought him considerable artistic accolades; some of this work, while decidedly abstract in character, was nevertheless inspired by the natural surroundings of that relatively remote Rockland County location, especially the tranquility and remoteness which greatly appealed to the artist. Although Pousette-Dart lived and maintained a studio outside of New York City, thus distancing himself physically from the city's robust artistic scene and the so-called New York School of which he was a foremost contributor, he was by no means isolated as a result of his rural residency in Rockland County. Visitors to the house included fellow artists such as Mark Rothko, students, and guests which he and his wife, Evelyn, entertained socially, among them the actor Burgess Meredith, who lived nearby in Pomona and who was a close friend of the Pousette-Darts. The nominated house and studio, which was built as a component of a sprawling estate developed for commission merchant Henry P. McKenney in a distinctive Arts & Crafts idiom, retains considerable physical integrity to Pousette-Dart's historic period of occupancy, 1959 to 1992; as such it remains today to accurately chronicle the mature stages of Pousette-Dart's influential life and artistic career. It is thus a site of considerable importance to the field of American twentieth-century visual art and one of the pioneering figures of mid-century Abstract Expressionist painting, whose work was at the very vanguard of that modern artistic movement. Richard Pousette-Dart's paintings are today maintained in major museum collections throughout the world, foremost among them the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York; the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.; the *Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain* in Strasbourg, France; the Tel Aviv Museum in Israel; and the *Museum Pfalzgalerie Kaiserslautern* in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Many of the works maintained in those collections were created by Pousette-Dart in his upstairs studio space in the nominated building, which survives largely as he lived and worked in it during his lifetime; the building currently functions in part as an archival space under the auspices of the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation. The property is being nominated in association with NRHP Criterion B, in the area of Art, for its direct and salient association with Richard Pousette-Dart, a central and pioneering figure in the Abstract Expressionist movement and an accomplished and recognized figure in the field of twentieth-century American art. The nominated resource is exceptionally significant given the prominent and influential role Pousette-Dart played in the visual arts field, both as an artist and teacher, and given his continued influence while residing there; the cited period of significance, 1959 to 1992, corresponds directly with Pousette-Dart's residency.

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

**Developmental history/additional historic context information**

*Historic Context*

The Richard Pousette-Dart House & Studio is located northeast of the Village of Suffern, immediately adjacent to an early overland transportation corridor, the Haverstraw-Suffern Road, present-day U.S. Route 202. That road connected Suffern and the nearby Ramapo Pass with Haverstraw and the Hudson River to the northeast, east of the Ramapo Mountains, which formed a formidable natural barrier between the immediate region and areas located further to the north; this barrier was in part responsible for the separation of Orange and Rockland counties, which formed a single entity until 1798. The Ramapo township was early in its history known as Kakiat, the name of an early land patent, and when set off from adjacent Haverstraw in 1791 it bore the name New Hempstead, a legacy of its settlement by families hailing from Hempstead, Nassau County. That part of the Town of Ramapo in which the Pousette-Dart house is located was known in the nineteenth and early twentieth century by the name Sherwoodville, in honor of the Reverend James Sherwood, a figure of considerable importance in the historic development of that locale. Sherwoodville developed alongside the Haverstraw-Suffern Road and a tributary of the Mahwah River. The latter provided hydraulic power for an early grist mill established by Jacobus van Buskirk in the pre-Revolutionary War period, and was used subsequently, until 1825, for tanning-related bark milling. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century that tributary came to sustain a mill erected for Sherwood that was used for the carding and fulling of cloth. Small-scale milling enterprises continued there into the second half of the nineteenth century, as Jonathan and Elias Sherwood were engaged with the manufacture of cotton bats.<sup>1</sup> While the historian David Cole, in his 1884 history of Rockland County, noted that “the old white oak frame of this building is still in good condition,” Sherwood’s mill has long since disappeared from the landscape.<sup>2</sup> Around 1800 a second grist mill was erected in the Sherwoodville area for Gilbert Cooper, on that same Mahwah River tributary, while a short distance to the south was located a foundry operated for a time by the Blauvelt family. The complexion of the area was largely agrarian, notwithstanding small-scale industrial enterprises.

The building that came to serve as the Pousette-Dart house and studio was originally built ca. 1916 as the carriage house and chauffeur’s lodging for the sprawling country estate of Henry Potter McKenney (1858-1940), a successful commission merchant who made a considerable personal fortune in the wool business; at the time of McKenney’s

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<sup>1</sup> David Cole, *History of Rockland County, New York, with Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men* (New York: J.B. Beers & Company, 1884), 284.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, *Rockland County*, 284.

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

passing he was noted as a leading figure in the contemporary American textile industry.<sup>3</sup> By the post-Civil War period the Suffern area had gained a reputation as “a pleasant summer resort,” as characterized by the *Rockland County Journal*, on account of the inspiring beauty of the surrounding Ramapo Valley, especially because it could be conveniently and speedily reached by railroad from New York City.<sup>4</sup> Numerous influential figures developed country retreats there in addition to McKenney, among them David McConnell, founder of the California Perfume Company, later Avon; Thomas Fortune Ryan, the New York City financier and tobacco and transportation magnate; lawyer Charles A. Pace; and Dr. Royal S. Copeland, a United States Senator and former New York City health commissioner.<sup>5</sup>

Henry Potter McKenney was born in Massachusetts and raised in Brooklyn, New York, where he received his schooling, and he later attended Columbia University. In 1877 he left college and, in partnership with his brother, William J. McKenney, and his half-brother Charles H. Wheeler, established the New York business office of Mackintosh, Greene & Co., woolen commission merchants based in Boston, Massachusetts. McKenney subsequently left that business and formed H.P. McKenney & Co., a woolen commission firm with offices on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, a business interest that he headed and that was liquidated in 1934. Following the liquidation of his business interests and his subsequent retirement, McKenney focused on the development of Valley Head Farm, a large country estate in the Sherwoodville area that was noted by one observer as “one of the finest in Rockland County.”<sup>6</sup> McKenney’s farm came to include not only quarters for himself and members of his immediate family but also accommodations for extended family, and he additionally gave land from his estate in 1905 for the construction of the Suffern Community Club, which was intended to provide recreational opportunities for area residents in what remained a somewhat remote location at that time. Guiding that organization following its inception were McKenney and other influential citizens, those being Charles C. Galbraith, Henry Von L. Meyer, Charles Peck, Irving Coe and Walter Fairchild.<sup>7</sup> The club later fell into disuse during the 1930s, but it was later reborn as the Antrim Playhouse and remains active to this day. McKenney additionally served as chairman of the executive board of the Good Roads Association, as director of the Suffern Amusement Company, as founder of the Rockland County Farm Bureau, as president of the Merchants Protective Association, and as a lifetime member of the National Arts Club.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “H.P. McKenney Dies at Home Near Suffern,” *Journal News*, 26 February 1940.

<sup>4</sup> Craig H. Long, *Images of America: Suffern* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2011), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Long, *Suffern*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> “H.P. McKenney Dies.”

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.antrimplayhouse.com/Antrim-History.html>, accessed 26 July 2019.

<sup>8</sup> “H.P. McKenney Dies.”

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

According to John Henry McKenney, the great-great grandson of Henry P. McKenney, while he was still residing in New York City the latter's chauffeur would drive him to Rockland County each Thursday evening in his Locomobile, which would be stored in the garage portion of the carriage house.<sup>9</sup> In the federal census of 1930 McKenney was recorded as residing in the Town of Ramapo, his occupation noted at that time as commission merchant. No additional family members were censused at that date; instead, the remaining members of the McKenney household consisted of his German-born chauffeur, Henry F. Wishmeyer, along with five other estate staff, those being a gardener, a cook, a waitress, a nurse and a maid. Following McKenney's death in 1940, his Valley Head Farm property was subdivided into several smaller estates, with the carriage house and gardener's cottage with attached greenhouse situated on a roughly two-acre lot. That parcel was purchased in 1959 by Richard Pousette-Dart, who was residing at that time in nearby Monsey, where the Pousette-Darts had moved in 1955 from the Sloatsburg area of Rockland County; prior to that time the family had resided in an apartment in New York City.<sup>10</sup>

*Richard Pousette-Dart: A Biographical Overview of His Art*

The following statement serves as a succinct introduction to Richard Pousette-Dart's art and his influence on the field of American visual arts in the mid-twentieth century period. It is followed by a more detailed biography of the artist's life and career, which was assembled by the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation.

Richard Pousette-Dart was an American artist best known for his large-scale abstract paintings. Composed of aggregate patterns and forms, his works form sprawling, frenetic compositions that made Pousette-Dart one of the founders of the New York School of painting... Frequenting the lower Manhattan pub scene that included fellow Abstract Expressionists like Jackson Pollack, Pousette-Dart quickly rose to prominence as one of New York's leading abstract painters, inspiring younger artists like Richard Tuttle and Robert Rauschenberg.<sup>11</sup>

Richard Pousette-Dart was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, in 1916. His father, Nathaniel Jermund Pousette, was the son of Swedish immigrants and a painter, writer and art director who studied at the Art Students League in New York and with Robert Henri in Philadelphia; his mother, Flora Louise Dart, was a poet and musician. In 1918 the Pousette-Dart family moved to Valhalla, New York, where the young man was raised in a culturally rich environment that nurtured his artistic inclinations. Forging strong personal convictions as a young man, Pousette-Dart declared himself a pacifist before graduating from high school. He attended Bard College in Annandale, New York, though he left before the completion of his degree to pursue an independent course as an artist in Manhattan,

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<sup>9</sup> Information courtesy of the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation ("RPDF" hereafter).

<sup>10</sup>"10 years' work at the Whitney," *The Journal-News*, 10 November 1974.

<sup>11</sup>"Richard Pousette-Dart," biographical synopsis, <http://www.artnet.com/artists/richard-pousette-dart/>, accessed 20 August 2019.

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

working first as an assistant to sculptor Paulanship (1885-1966) and then in the photography studio of Lynn T. Morgan (1889-1977). During that early and formative period of his career, he considered himself primarily a sculptor, though he experimented in a wide range of mediums, among them stone, brass, painting, drawing, photography and etching.<sup>12</sup>

The late 1930s and early 1940s were years of dynamic artistic growth for Pousette-Dart. Influenced by the Vorticist sculpture of French artist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (1891-1915), he forged a lexicon of biomorphic and totemic forms that would provide rich visual and symbolic sources for early paintings such as *Bird Woman* (1939) and enrich his extended painted repertoire. Pousette-Dart was deeply interested in the spiritual possibilities of painting – “the dynamic balance, or edge between the conscious and unconscious,” as he himself stated it– as well as the plastic and energetic immediacy of African, Oceanic and Native American carving, which he had come to familiarize himself with.<sup>13</sup>

The first one-man exhibition of Richard Pousette-Dart’s paintings was staged at the Artists’ Gallery in New York City in fall of 1941. The following year he completed *Symphony No. 1, The Transcendental*, today recognized as one of the first mural-size canvases of the American Abstract Expressionist movement; it was described by one source as “monumental in scale and densely and thickly painted... a remarkable synthesis of Cubism, biomorphic Surrealism, and 1930s mural painting.”<sup>14</sup> Heroically ambitious, *Symphony No. 1* unveiled in monumental scale the complex interlocking and layering of forms, as well as the distinctive interplay of surface and light, that would become hallmarks of Pousette-Dart’s mature artistic accomplishments. Successful one-man exhibitions followed in New York City at the Marian Willard Gallery, Howard Putzel’s 67 Gallery, and Peggy Guggenheim’s Art of This Century.<sup>15</sup>

In 1948, Pousette-Dart inaugurated a long-standing relationship with the New York City gallery of Betty Parsons (1900-1982), an important early advocate and promoter of Abstract Expressionism in the United States. Pousette-Dart exhibited his work there along with other influential contemporary artists of the so-called New York School, among them Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, Theodoros Stamos and Ad Reinhardt, some of whom sat as subjects for the artist’s efforts to create classic photography and art portraits made from manipulated

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<sup>12</sup>Biographical account, RPDF, <https://www.pousette-dartfoundation.org/artist>, accessed 26 July 2019.

<sup>13</sup>Biographical account, RPDF.

<sup>14</sup>Description of the painting as provided by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1996.367/>, accessed 26 July 2019.

<sup>15</sup>Biographical account, RPDF.

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

and multiple images. That body of photographic work led to an exhibition, staged at the Parsons gallery in 1948, in which Pousette-Dart demonstrated his interest in photography as “a serious visual enterprise.”<sup>16</sup> By the late 1940s, Pousette-Dart’s paintings and wire sculptures began to embrace the amplification of line, often realized by the direct application of paint from the tube onto mixed-medium grounds interwoven with sand, poured paint and gold and silver leaf. Embracing a deep appreciation for Gothic and Byzantine manuscript illuminations, mosaics and stained-glass windows, Pousette-Dart employed heavy applications of impasto and resplendent, prismatic color to celebrate the transcendent power of mythic forms, as well as the art-making process itself.<sup>17</sup>

Although Pousette-Dart maintained a fiercely independent position throughout his career, he contributed meaningfully to key discourses within the field of Abstract Expressionism. In 1948 he attended gatherings at a school called Subjects of the Artist and, in 1950, participated in the three-day conference conducted at Studio 35 in New York City, during which leaders in the field of Abstract Expressionism met to discuss their work as well as the contemporary American art scene. In 1951 Pousette-Dart gained additional visibility, as he appeared that year in *Life Magazine* in Nina Leen’s iconic photograph, *The Irascibles*, which featured prominent painters who had formally protested contemporary art policies at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the exhibition entitled *American Painting Today—1950*. “The Irascibles,” or “Irascible 18,” included Pousette-Dart, Pollock, Rothko, and Willem de Kooning, whose names appear along with those of others on an open letter to Roland L. Redmond, president of the museum. In that letter they collectively denounced the upcoming exhibition, which they felt would largely exclude what they termed “advanced art.” “We draw to the attention of those gentlemen the historical fact that, for roughly a hundred years, only advanced art has made any consequential contribution to civilization.”<sup>18</sup> Despite his growing recognition within the New York City art world, Pousette-Dart relocated with his family in 1951 to a farm house in Sloatsburg in Rockland County, New York, and in 1959 they acquired the nominated property on Haverstraw Road, outside of Suffern.<sup>19</sup> The artist lived with his family and maintained a studio at the latter address for the remainder of his life. The 1950s proved to be a prolific decade for Pousette-Dart, with major bodies of work from that period including *White Paintings* – ethereal compositions executed with graphite line and oil on variegated white grounds.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>“Absence/Presence: Richard Pousette-Dart as Photographer,” Munson Williams Proctor Arts Institute, <https://www.mwpai.org/view/exhibitions/past/absence-presence-the-photographs-of-richard-pousette-dart/>, accessed 20 August 2019.

<sup>17</sup>Biographical account, RPDF.

<sup>18</sup>Open letter to Roland L. Redmond, 20 May 1950.

<sup>19</sup>Mortgage records indicate that the house was officially purchased on December 23, 1959; information courtesy of Charles Duncan, RPDF.



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

Name of Property

County and State

Pousette-Dart's painting moved in a new direction during the decade of the 1960s, by which time he had taken up residency in the Suffern area. Simplifying his compositions and exploring new methods of applying paint, his paintings and works on paper gravitated towards vibrating fields of thickly-layered points of color. Many works incorporate manifestations of the circle and other geometric forms, and those works that isolate and highlight "significant form" resulted in a series of works entitled *Heiroglyphs*, *Presences*, and *Radiances*. Examples of the new direction in his work were introduced to the public at a retrospective exhibition organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1963. As a mature artist, Pousette-Dart embraced the role of teacher, holding various educational positions at the Art Students League, The New School for Social Research, Columbia University, and Sarah Lawrence College, and he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters at Bard College. In 1981 he was honored with the inaugural Distinguished Lifetime in Art award from the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation and in 1982 he was invited by the International Committee to exhibit in the main pavilion of the 40th Venice Biennale. Retrospective exhibitions of the artist's work followed in 1986 at Museum of Art, Fort Lauderdale, Florida and at the Indianapolis Museum of Art in Indiana in 1990, the latter serving as the definitive survey mounted during the artist's lifetime. Richard Pousette-Dart died in New York City on October 25, 1992.<sup>21</sup>

*Richard Pousette-Dart in Suffern, 1959-1992*

The following observations relative to the artist's residency at the nominated Suffern-area house were in large measure provided by his daughter, Joanna Pousette-Dart (b. 1947), an accomplished American artist in her own right, and his son, Jon Pousette-Dart (b. 1952), who has enjoyed a successful career as a songwriter, musician and performing artist. Their insightful comments collectively provide a compelling first-hand account of their father's residency there. The following account was offered by the artist's son and serves as a fitting introduction to understanding the significance of the nominated Suffern-area house and property to his father's life and artistic career:

It is rather hard to estimate what our house in Suffern was to my father because he was a man who "did" rather than "talked." Needless to say, though, the natural surroundings where we lived, at the foot of the Ramapo Mountains and the headwaters of the Mahwah River, defined for my father a way of life, a way of thinking, and a way of feeling that was fundamental to the way he thought about his relationship to the world around him and hence, guided the choices he made as an artist whose work drew so closely from nature. In fact, Richard's work drew from nature its most elemental and spiritual components.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Biographical account, RPDF.

<sup>21</sup>Biographical account, RPDF.

<sup>22</sup>Recollections of Jon Pousette-Dart, courtesy of RPDF ("Jon P-D Recollections" hereafter).

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

As noted by Jon Pousette-Dart, a certain degree of underlying context is necessary to properly understand this period of the artist's life and his Suffern residency. "My father attended high school, and Bard College very briefly, but had no formal art training."

His parents believed he should pursue his own interests and goals from the beginning and encouraged him to do so. Hence by the time he was in his late teens he was both a free spirit, self-directed, and an exceedingly competent person. By the age of 26 he had produced one of his most famous works "Symphony No. 1 The Transcendental" now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. This large-scale work preceded all of his contemporaries including Pollock and Arshile Gorky, who would lay claim to the concept of painting large canvases. But it was my father who produced them first, a fact to this day the art world has largely ignored.

Moving to Suffern allowed him to go into full drive in terms of scope and output. Because Suffern was a carriage house and not a typical house, it provided him with the open living and working environment he desired. This, and having Harriman Park at his doorstep, created for him, his perfect world. He often said he didn't need to travel as his work took him wherever he needed to go – a real tribute to both his imagination and the setting of his studio. He had great trouble sleeping, so in my entire life I saw a man completely consumed in his passion. In Suffern he pursued painting, watercolors, sculpture, photography, brass metal work, and writing. Additionally, he passionately pursued a love of electronic theory by assembling a massive ham radio station, for which he built all his own transformers. His love of electronics and his ability to pursue to the center, the nature of how all mechanical things worked, was very much a part of why and how he understood and related to natural world and the cosmos.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to serving as the Pousette-Dart's family home and as the artist's principal base of operations, the nominated house and property also served as a social gathering place for family friends, fellow artists and students. During the later 1970s Pousette-Dart began teaching at the Art Student's League in New York City, after which time, by his son's account, "the Suffern house became a haven for many of his students, who would visit at his invitation and experience for themselves, the quietness and tranquility that the house and property provided, and indeed, nature itself, which informed so much of his work."<sup>24</sup> Among those students upon whom the artist made a considerable impression was Christopher Wool (b. 1955), who, by Jon Pousette-Dart's account, "was greatly influenced by my father and has maintained a close relationship with our family out of his love for Richard's work."<sup>25</sup> Other guests there included Pousette-Dart's friend and contemporary, artist Mark Rothko (1903-1970), and the actor Burgess Meredith (1907-1997), a longtime family friend who resided in Pomona. In 1976 both Richard Pousette-Dart and his wife, Evelyn, served as co-chairs for a tribute to Meredith, a dinner conducted at the Rockland County Country Club in Sparkill for the benefit of the Rockland Center for the Arts.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Jon P-D Recollections.

<sup>24</sup>Jon P-D Recollections.

<sup>25</sup>Jon P-D Recollections.

<sup>26</sup>"Tribute to Burgess Meredith to mark arts center benefit," *The Journal-News*, 21 September 1979.

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

The nominated property's tranquil setting served as a constant font of inspiration for Pousette-Dart's work, which, by his son's account, "can clearly be seen standing at the foot of the Ramapo mountains and being right on a waterfall of the Mahwah river. The sound of that waterfall was the backdrop of my entire life as a child."<sup>27</sup> As the artist himself once privately penned in a journal, "All art that is meaningful seems to be both of nature and abstraction inseparably interwoven."<sup>28</sup> Although Richard Pousette-Dart's oeuvre was decidedly abstract and not representational in nature, the house's natural environment nevertheless served to inform the creative process, as the artist himself intimated in his private writings: "As flowers grow, so art must be nurtured and gardened, watered, fed, perceived, loved."<sup>29</sup>

Richard Pousette-Dart, while associated with a larger group of individuals who collectively shaped the contemporary field of American visual arts in the mid-twentieth century, was nevertheless a staunchly if not fiercely individualistic figure. As the artist himself stated, while being interviewed in his Suffern studio in advance of a retrospective show of his work at the Whitney Museum in 1974, "I think of myself as a whole, creative human being. People are always trying to put me in a category. I resent this attempt at categorization."<sup>30</sup> He further amplified that point in stating "I'm a rugged individualist;" he preferred the atmosphere of rural Rockland County, which he found conducive to contemplative thought, more suitable to his temperament and ideal for his need to work "alone."<sup>31</sup> Pousette-Dart was also someone who did not, in his son's words, "pursue relentless self-promotion [though] many of his contemporaries did."

He paid a professional price for this but he traded that off for both the freedom of life at the Suffern house and a life unencumbered by what he came to see as the many distractions of life in New York City. Suffern was a completely tranquil and natural retreat.<sup>32</sup>

Speaking of the contemporary art market in advance of his 1974 Whitney exhibition, Pousette-Dart felt that artists were too often manipulated; "However, real artists are impervious to the marketplace. Art transcends competition. An artist runs amuck when he worries too much about money and how much his art will bring."<sup>33</sup>

The artist's daughter, Joanna Pousette-Dart, has also recounted the relevance of the nominated site to her father's life and work. By her account her father deeply appreciated and needed the tranquility that the Suffern property

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<sup>27</sup>Jon P-D Recollections.

<sup>28</sup>Richard Pousette-Dart, private journal, courtesy of RPDF.

<sup>29</sup>Richard Pousette-Dart, private journal, courtesy of RPDF

<sup>30</sup>"10 years' work at the Whitney," *The Journal-News*.

<sup>31</sup>"10 years' work at the Whitney," *The Journal-News*.

<sup>32</sup>Jon P-D Recollections.

<sup>33</sup>"10 years' work at the Whitney," *The Journal-News*.

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

provided, offering as it did both solitude and a source of creative inspiration. It was that setting, in the thickly studded woods alongside the Mahwah River and in the shadow of the Ramapo Mountains, that served as a place where the artist could connect his ideas about the natural world to his thoughts on the cosmos, the time-space continuum, nature as a source of abstraction, and the process of creating art.<sup>34</sup> Her father would often take walks in the woods, searching for rocks and fossils, objects which spoke to him as representing the essence of nature and the passage of time, and he occasionally painted *en plein air*. While those walks and the objects he collected on them were not necessarily a direct part of his art-making process, their shapes, texture, and deeply layered patterns were nevertheless sources of direct inspiration and often expressed the essence and aura of a painting itself.<sup>35</sup>

Charles Duncan, executive director of the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation, has observed that the artist's work underwent a dramatic shift following his move to the Haverstraw Road property:

The imagery within his paintings transformed from linear forms and well-defined shapes towards diffuse "all-over" abstractions built from a multitude of small dabs and dots of paint. Indeed, Pousette-Dart began seeing through a new lens with renewed inspiration that captured both the infinite and molecular possibilities of his new surroundings.<sup>36</sup>

It was not merely the move to a new location, but more specifically the character of that new environment, with its many inspiring natural features, that account for that shift in artist's work; "The raw beauty of this rural setting quickly became the locus of Pousette-Dart's art-making, in both literal and transcendent terms."<sup>37</sup> Paintings now housed in major American museum collections, among them *Presence, Ramapo Mist* (1969/oil on linen, Whitney Museum of American Art), New York; *Presence, Ramapo Horizon* (1975/acrylic on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art), convey what Duncan has characterized as "an aura of light filtered through the natural atmosphere of the property."

*Ramapo Mist*, for example, conveys the quietude of the morning haze: shapes still present on the property take form, yet remain fugitive. A large painting from 1975, *Ramapo*, suggests the irregular path of the Mahwah River, here bisecting the canvas. Within this monumental abstract work, the groundbreaking approaches of late-twentieth century art making and a keen reverence for the traditions of the New York landscape painters of the early nineteenth century are interwoven masterfully by Pousette-Dart.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Recollections of Joanna Pousette-Dart, courtesy of RPDF ("Joanna P-D Recollections" hereafter).

<sup>35</sup>Joanna P-D Recollections.

<sup>36</sup>Charles Duncan, "The relationship between Richard Pousette-Dart's work and 932 Haverstraw Road, Suffern," August 2019, courtesy of RPDF.

<sup>37</sup>Duncan, "932 Haverstraw Road."

<sup>38</sup>Duncan, "932 Haverstraw Road."

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

One additional work, *Dance of Earth and Stars* (1987-1990), which is maintained in the collection of the White House, offers itself as a fitting example of the artist's later work and, in the words of Duncan, it "serves as a summation of the artist's appreciation for the natural beauty of the Suffern property."

Not only does it capture the artist's fascination with the sublime experience of studying the skies, but it celebrates the the interconnectedness of the early and ethereal, as well as the place of the artist within an ever-changing world. Indeed, 932 Haverstraw Road was Richard Pousette-Dart's universe, and overwhelmingly it served as a source of tangible and spiritual nourishment that guided his artistic vision.<sup>39</sup>

Richard Pousette-Dart's affinity for the natural environment, which effected a profound influence on his later work, nevertheless extended beyond his Suffern-area property. In 1986 he, along with fellow artists Hugh Mesibov (1916-2016), Anne Poor (1918-2002) and others, joined in opposing the construction of the Signal Environmental Systems facility on the Hudson River in Haverstraw, a garbage-burning power plant with a 350-foot tall smokestack. "It's [the Hudson River] one of the greatest rivers of the world and it's being ruined by commercial developers who don't care about anything except money," Pousette-Dart was quoted as saying at the time.<sup>40</sup> Earlier, in 1969, Pousette-Dart was among a group of Rockland County artists, along with Henry Varnum Poor (1887-1970) of New City, who donated work to be auctioned at the Parke-Bernet gallery in New York City to finance Rockland County's purchase of the Clausland Mountain Park in Orangeburg.<sup>41</sup> He was also active in promoting the arts on the local and regional level, including conducting a studio class in Palisades for the benefit of aspiring artists in 1977, in association with the Rockland Center for the Arts, in contributing his skill in hanging paintings for a 1962 show at the Rockland Foundation in West Nyack, and serving as a juror for art shows.<sup>42</sup> In 1986 Pousette-Dart advocated for a plan forwarded by Rockland County legislators Harriet Cornell and Bruce Levine that called for the allocation of a small percentage of certain capital projects for the acquisition and maintenance of public art for the benefit of county residents. "I've never really seen a huge effort towards art, aesthetics, beauty. This is long overdue," he stated; "The county needs to believe in its artists. [It has] a moral and creative responsibility to capitalize on this opportunity."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Duncan, "932 Haverstraw Road."

<sup>40</sup>"Artists oppose Signal plant," *The Journal-News*, 10 February 1986.

<sup>41</sup>"Alfred Bristol to Auction Art for Mountain," *The Rockland County Journal-News*, 11 September 1969.

<sup>42</sup>"Pousette-Dart to Teach; Arts center to unveil new project in Palisades," *The Journal-News*, 18 September 1977; "Women's Art at Foundation," *The Rockland County Journal-News*, 26 February 1962; "Calling all artists," *The Journal-News*, 9 February 1975.

<sup>43</sup>"Proposed 'percent for art' bill up for vote," *The Journal-News*, 31 August 1986.

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

*The Artist's Studio*

The survival of Pousette-Dart's upstairs studio in the Haverstraw Road house as he knew and worked in it is among the more compelling aspects of the nominated property. It was there—"removed more by psychological distance than actual miles from the busy cultural scene of New York"<sup>44</sup>—that the artist produced the work which defined his career from the later 1950s until his death. The following account was published by the Whitney Museum of American Art as an accompaniment to a partial recreation of the artist's studio at the museum in 1998, which remains today much as it did at that time and during the artist's active career:

An artist's studio is not only a place for creating painting, sculpture, or photography, but also a retreat, an often private haven in which to contemplate one's work and perhaps consider the work of mentors, colleagues or pupils. The studio is thus a reflection of the artist's personality and temperament. A visit to Pousette-Dart's studio, which has been preserved in the house in Suffern by the artist's estate, provides an essential context for understanding his art and creative process. By evoking the atmosphere of his studio and juxtaposing Pousette-Dart's paintings with his works in other media, as well as the art and objects he collected, this exhibition adds a new dimension to the achievements of one of the pioneers of modern American art.

Upon entering Pousette-Dart's studio, one immediately notices the high ceilings and paint-speckled floor. Light, filtered through the skylight above and the bow window at the far end of the room, infuses the space with changing intensities of color, depending on the season, weather, or time of day. The artist's paintings fill wooden racks that run along the left wall; during his lifetime, and even today, a changing selection of canvasses would be out for viewing. Sculptures made from painted wire, wood, and styrofoam stand on tables and shelves in the lofts above. Five tall easels and twice as many worktables occupy much of the floor in the middle and right side of the room. Each is laden with the familiar tools of the artist—tubes of paint, brushes, pens, pencils, and palettes. But there are also dozens of curious-looking creations that resemble small paintings on paper or styrofoam and that have been fitted with "handles" made from empty toothpaste or checkbook boxes or pieces of wood. These turn out to be applicators that Pousette-Dart fashioned for rubbing paint onto the surfaces of his canvasses. The tin cups and aluminum pans he used as palettes are everywhere.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to the artwork and characteristic artistic implements and supplies which Pousette-Dart used, the studio was also a place to display various objects and other items of interest and inspiration. Scattered throughout are things which the artist often took apart in order to view their inner workings, among them electronics, antique radios, typewriters and clocks. In some instances, everyday objects were transformed into works of art by Pousette-Dart by the application of paint. As noted in the Whitney catalog, "many of the forms that recur throughout Pousette-Dart's work may be discovered among the vast array of objects he assembled in the studio."<sup>46</sup> Of the artist's studio space Adam D. Weinberg, the Alice Pratt Brown Director of the Whitney Museum of American Art, stated simply "the studio was always with him, always a part of him."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Susan B. Hirschfeld, *Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*, Whitney Museum of American Art (1998).

<sup>45</sup>Hirschfeld, *Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*.

<sup>46</sup>Hirschfeld, *Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*.

<sup>47</sup>Adam D. Weinberg, comments delivered at centennial symposium on the artist, Whitney Museum of American Art, 29 September 2016; transcribed by Jonathan Hyman. The Whitney Museum was and remains a champion of Pousette-Dart's work. The institution

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

The artist himself noted the following relative to the importance of the artist's studio around 1940:

Paintings are not properly seen in galleries but only in the solitude and wholeness of their studios where casually, easily, mystically one may be in touch with the whole meaning of the [artist]—where no special few are shown polished and isolated or enthroned but the slightest is mixed among with the most bold and grand and the significance is not of one nor another but of the harmonies as well as the discords arising out of the whole play. Art is only significant as it takes us to the whole [person] and gives us new insights and opens secrets towards the unknown heart...<sup>48</sup>

*Conclusion*

The house and property on Haverstraw Road remain the preeminent historic resource that chronicles the life and career of American twentieth-century artist Richard Pousette-Dart. His residency there spanned over 30 years and corresponded with the mature phase of his artistic career, during which time he continued to build on his initial artistic successes of the early 1940s. The artist is today widely recognized as one of the pioneering figures of the American Abstract Expressionist movement and the New York School, a legacy confirmed by the retention of his work in major art institutions in the United States and abroad. As noted by Whitney Museum assistant curator Susan B. Hirschfeld in 1998, Pousette-Dart had, by the time he left New York in 1951, “already helped to formulate a new style of painting that irrevocably altered the course of art in the twentieth century.”<sup>49</sup> One critic, writing in consideration of his 1974 exhibition at the Whitney Museum, opined that Pousette-Dart's work was “as impressive as any American of his age could muster.”<sup>50</sup> The following account, published as part of his obituary in the *New York Times*, places the artist's life and work in succinct context:

Mr. Pousette-Dart had been linked since the 1940s with New York School artists like Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning (and appeared with them in a famous 1951 *Life* magazine photograph, which labelled the group “The Irascibles.”) But he was always a distinctive and solitary figure. While his early work shared the Abstract Expressionists predilections for pictographic and totemic forms and for gestural brush strokes, as a painter and as a person he conveyed nothing of their chest-thumping self-importance... The critic Hilton Kramer, a longtime advocate of the artist's work, wrote in *The New York Times* in 1974, that Mr. Pousette-Dart was “independent in every sense—independent of cliques and coteries, and independent, too, in the integrity and beauty of his personal vision.”<sup>51</sup>

The nominated house and property today survive largely as he knew them, as does his remarkably intact studio. Adam D. Weinberg, on the occasion of what would have been Richard Pousette-Dart's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, made note

---

maintains five of the artist's paintings in its permanent collection that reflect the stylistic diversity of his art. Pousette-Dart's work was a staple of the Whitney Museum and appeared in 17 annual and biennial exhibitions and was additionally featured in dozens of group exhibitions. As noted by Weinberg in his remarks, the museum “held three one person shows of his art, which is something we have not often done.”

<sup>48</sup>Hirschfeld, *Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*.

<sup>49</sup>Hirschfeld, *Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*.

<sup>50</sup>“10 years' work at the Whitney,” *The Journal-News*.

<sup>51</sup>“Richard Pousette-Dart, 76, Dies; An Early Abstract Expressionist Painter,” *The New York Times*, 27 October 1992.

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

Name of Property

County and State

of the importance of the Suffern house to the artist and his work of the 1960s and 1970s: “It was that atmosphere. It was the light that poured into the galleries. It was the sound of the [Mahwah] River outside. It was the dew on the grass outside. All of these other things which came in through the window and that he heard and that he listened and that he connected to...”<sup>52</sup> It is the intent of the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation to see that this highly significant and direct link to the artist’s life and artistic legacy remains that way for the edification of future generations.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Cole, David. *History of Rockland County, New York, with Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men* (New York: J.B. Beers & Company, 1884.

*Collection in Context: Richard Pousette-Dart, The Studio Within*. Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>52</sup>Adam D. Weinberg, Whitney Museum of American Art, 29 September 2016.



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2.14 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>575927</u> Zone	<u>4557407</u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing	3	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing
2	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing	4	<u>                    </u> Zone	<u>                    </u> Easting	<u>                    </u> Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is depicted on the enclosed mapping. All maps are entitled "Pousette-Dart, Richard, House & Studio, Suffern, Rockland Co., NY."

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination was drawn to reflect historic-period circumstances and corresponds with the property dimensions as purchased by Richard Pousette-Dart in 1959 and as it remained throughout his lifetime. No additional or "buffer" land is included within the boundary.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title William E. Krattinger  
organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation date August 2019  
street & number PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167  
city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188  
e-mail [William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov](mailto:William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov)

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

Name of Property

County and State

**Photographs:**

Photography copyright Jonathan C. Hyman, Bethel, New York, 2017- 2019

TIFF file format, original digital files maintained at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford, NY 12188

- 001 EXTERIOR/SETTING, driveway, view looking roughly south towards Haverstraw Road
- 002 EXTERIOR/SETTING, view looking roughly north from driveway towards greenhouse and gardener's cottage, House/studio in background center
- 003 EXTERIOR/SETTING, view looking to north from driveway in front of house/studio towards Mahwah River, dam and associated impoundment
- 004 EXTERIOR, view looking to southeast towards gardener's cottage and greenhouse, landscape elements in foreground
- 005 EXTERIOR, detail view showing junction of gardener's cottage and greenhouse
- 006 EXTERIOR, house/studio, view showing south and west (principal) elevations
- 007 EXTERIOR, house/studio, partial view of west elevation
- 008 EXTERIOR, house/studio, view showing north elevation
- 009 EXTERIOR, house/studio, view showing east elevation
- 010 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, area on south side of plan used by RPD Foundation
- 011 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, area on south side of plan used by RPD Foundation
- 012 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, piano room
- 013 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, living room
- 014 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, dining room
- 015 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, kitchen
- 016 INTERIOR, house/studio, first floor, staircase to upper floor
- 017 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor hall and stair landing, studio to left, bedrooms to right
- 018 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, center bedroom, north side of plan
- 019 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, bedroom, northeast corner
- 020 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, bedroom, northwest corner
- 021 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio; note south-facing Palladian window
- 022 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, view looking north
- 023 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, northeast corner
- 024 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, view towards skylight
- 025 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, view south
- 026 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, general view
- 027 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, detail view
- 028 INTERIOR, house/studio, upper floor, Pousette-Dart studio, detail view

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

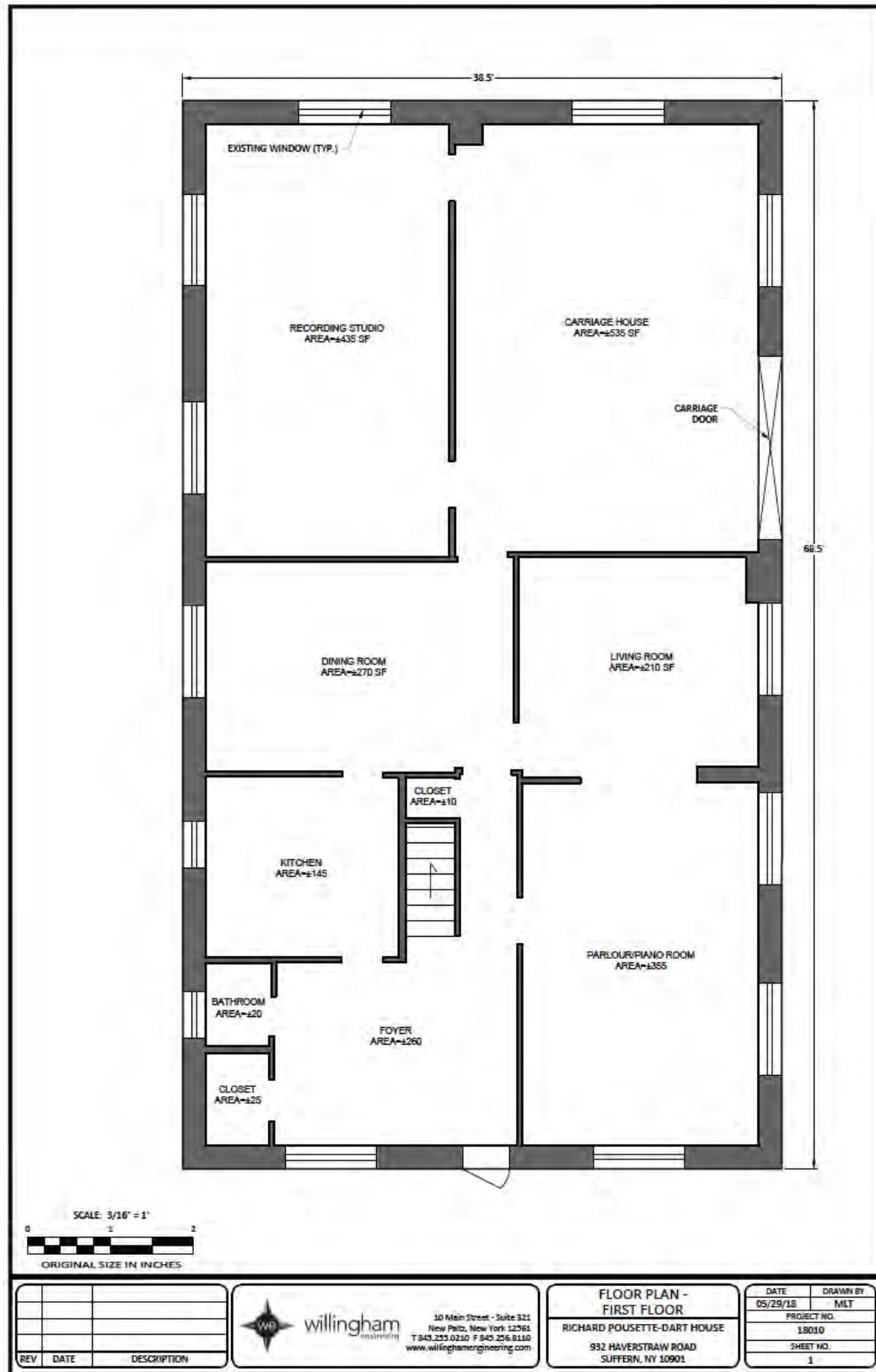
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State

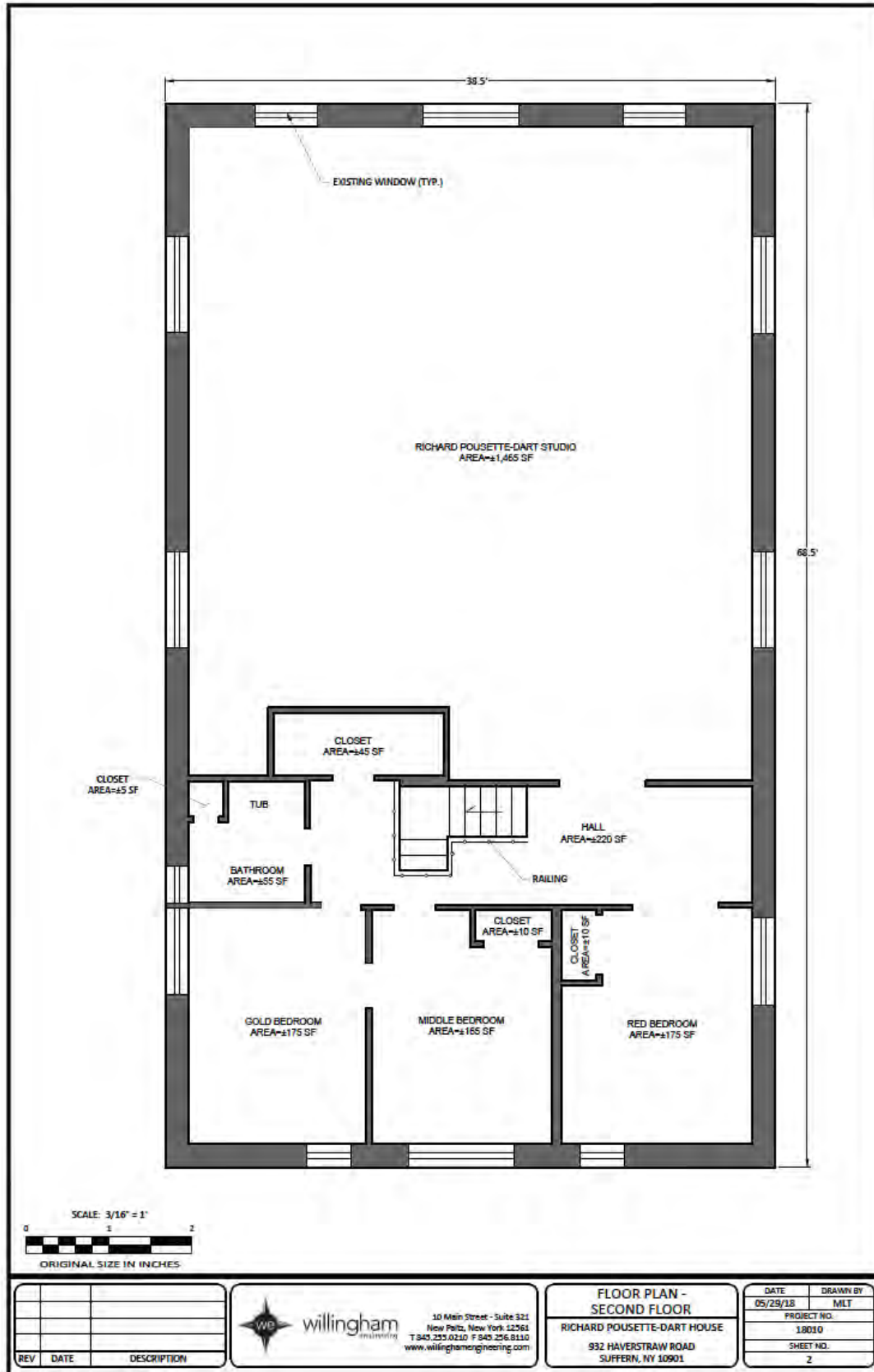


**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

Name of Property

County and State



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE, ca. 1962, Richard Pousette-Dart under chandelier in front of his Painting "Number 1" (1951) at the 932 Haverstraw Road house. Photo Credit: Herb Breuer

**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State



ABOVE, ca. 1962, Richard Pousette-Dart standing in his studio. Photo Credit: Herb Breuer  
BELOW, late 1960s, Richard Pousette-Dart sitting in his studio. Photo Credit: Nathan Rabin



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE, Nina Leen, *The Irascibles* (1950); Richard Pousette-Dart standing on left

POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE, Richard Pousette-Dart, *Presence, Ramapo Mist* (1969), oil on linen, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;  
BELOW, Richard Pousette-Dart, *Presence, Ramapo Horizon* (1975), acrylic on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art





**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

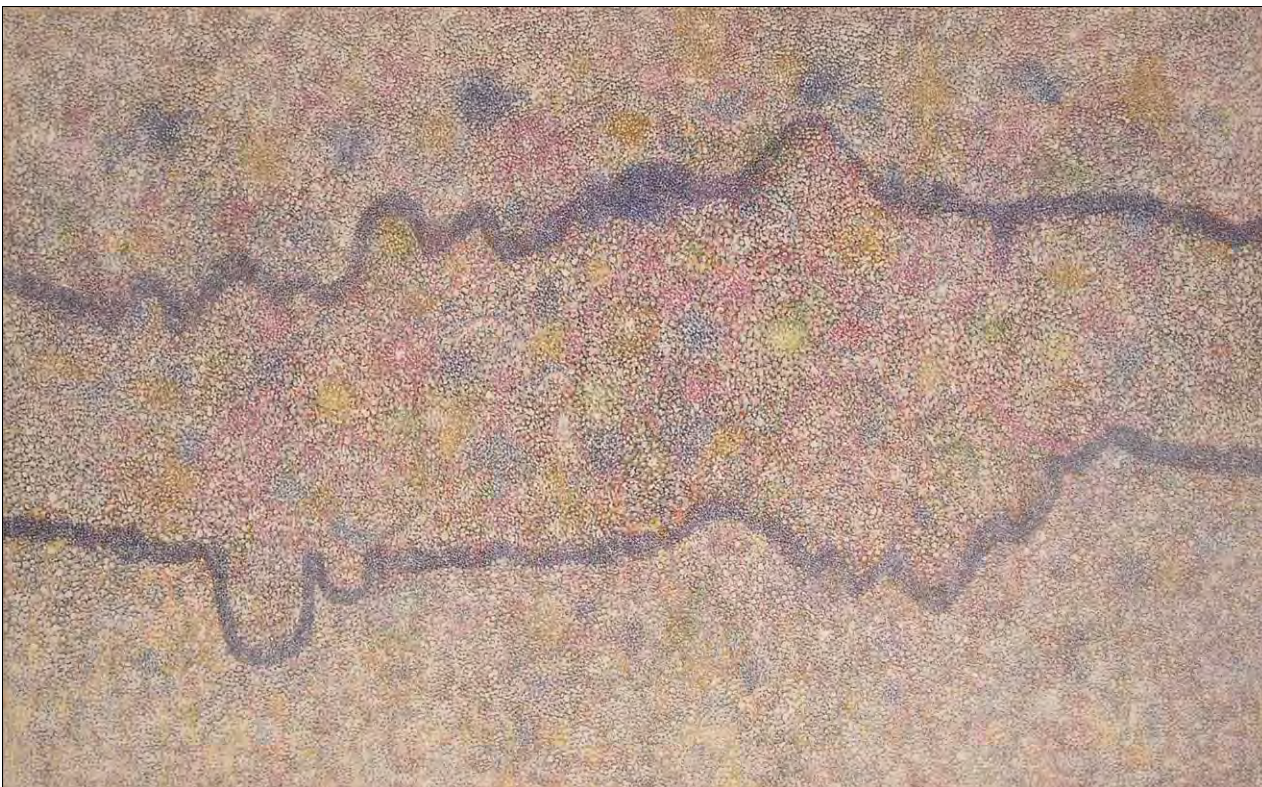
Name of Property

**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State



ABOVE, Richard Pousette-Dart, *Dance of Earth and Stars* (1987-1990), acrylic on linen, collection of the White House, Washington, D.C.; BELOW, *Ramapo Mist* (1975), oil on canvas, Pousette-Dart family



POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO

Name of Property

ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.

County and State



ABOVE, *Symphony No. 1 The Transcendental*, 1941-42; Metropolitan Museum of Art; BELOW, *Within the Room*, 1942, Whitney Museum of Art



**POUSETTE-DART, RICHARD, HOUSE & STUDIO**

Name of Property

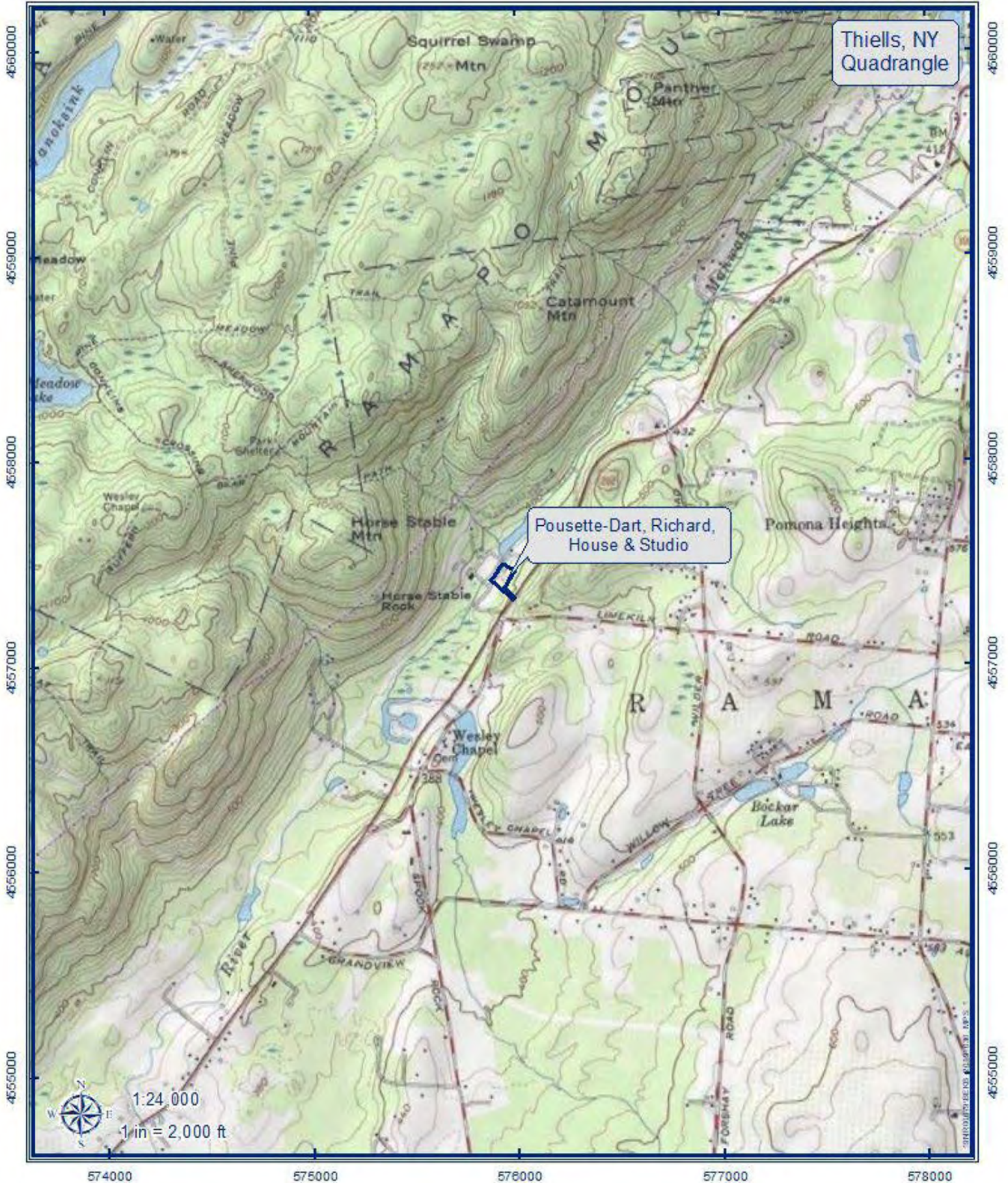
**ROCKLAND CO., N.Y.**

County and State



ABOVE & BELOW, Pousette-Dart studio as recreated at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1998.





Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter

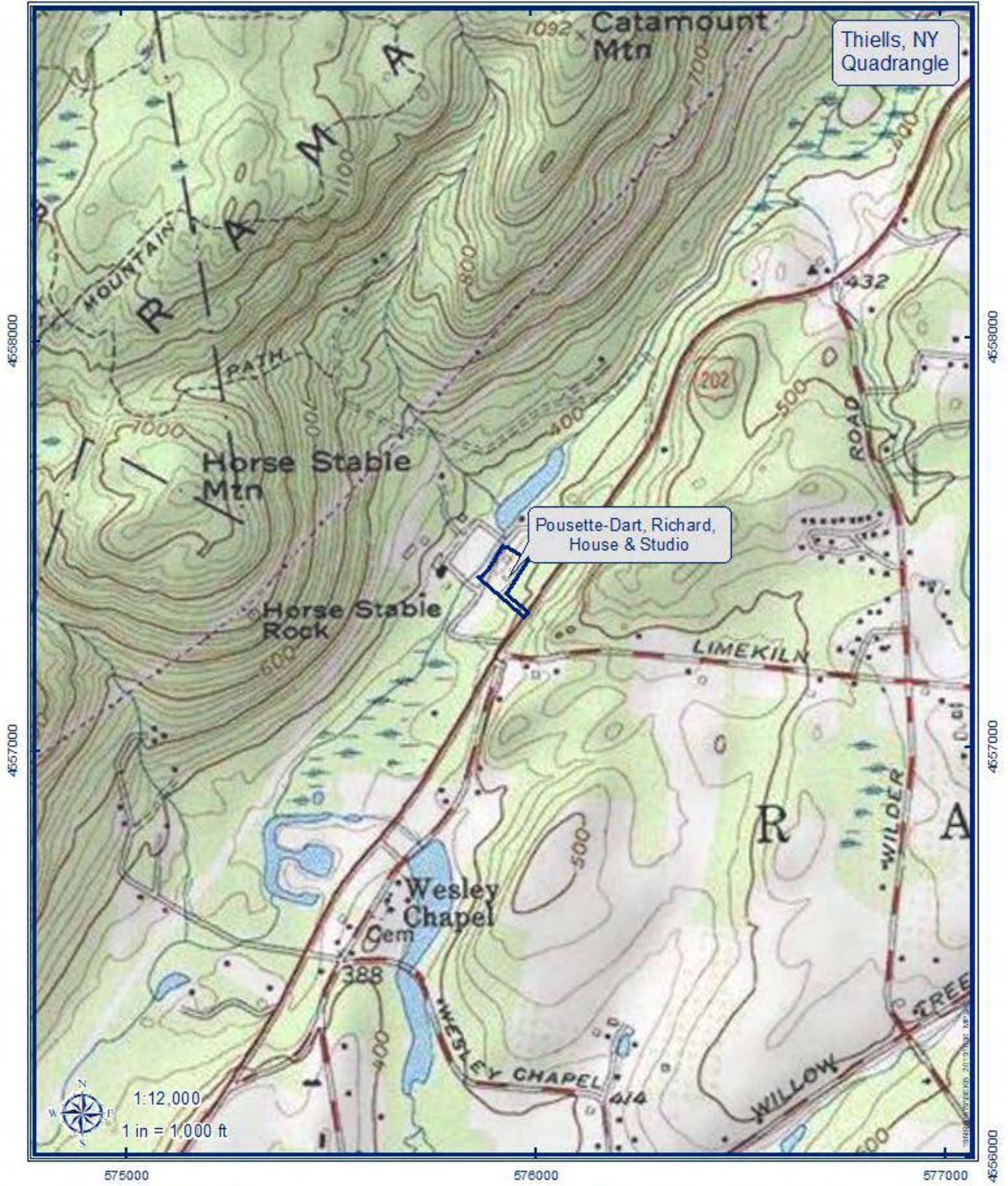


Pousette-Dart,  
Richard, House  
and Studio



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Pousette-Dart,  
Richard, House  
and Studio



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
Division for Historic Preservation



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
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Units: Meter



Pousette-Dart,  
Richard, House  
and Studio



Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
Division for Historic Preservation

$\Sigma = 2.14$  Acres

575927E 4557407N

Driveway

Lime Kiln Rd

Spook Rock Rd

Haverstraw Rd

4557000

4557000



1:4,000  
1 in = 333 ft

576000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



Pousette-Dart,  
Richard, House  
and Studio



NEW YORK  
STATE OF  
OPPORTUNITY  
Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation  
Division for Historic Preservation



































All begins shall done

MATILDA AVE.  
E. 242 ST.

FOR SALE

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RENTAL

HALOGEN

STYLING



ANGEL FIGURE  
25-X  
LEONARD'S WINDOW  
EYES IN ROSE  
SPRINKLE CROWN  
SUNFLOWER













UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Pousette-Dart, Richard, House and Studio

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: NEW YORK, Rockland

Date Received: 11/6/2019      Date of Pending List: 12/6/2019      Date of 16th Day: 12/23/2019      Date of 45th Day: 12/23/2019      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100004802

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL                | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape           | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource     | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG                 |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      12/23/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The Richard Pousette-Dart House and Studio is nationally significant for the house and studio of artist Pousette-Dart from the period of 1959-1992.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Criterion B, Art

Reviewer: Alexis Abernathy      Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2236      Date: 12/23/2019

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



9/9/19

Dear Mr. Krattinger:

My family has recently been informed by Jonathan Hyman that the New York State Board for Historic Preservation approved the nomination of the Richard Pousette-Dart House for status on the National and State Registers of Historic Places. We are heartened and quite pleased by this news as this designation is both productive for the Richard Pousette-Dart Foundation and a wonderful acknowledgement and nod to Richard's life's work and legacy that makes our family proud.

I write to thank you for your concerted effort in working with Jonathan, Alan Sorensen, my sister Joanna, myself and Charles Duncan from the Foundation in the most thoughtful and sensitive manner we could have asked for. Your belief in the beauty of the House and recognition of its historical and architectural importance is evinced in the very readable and informative nomination you prepared for the presentation in Oyster Bay on September, 5th. Your insight that the details surrounding Richard's life on the property and his use of it with regard to his artistic sensibility, thoughts on nature, and teaching was vital, and made the case for approval convincing. The details that were flushed out to this end will be useful to others who study Richard's work in the future.

We wish you good luck as you move on to your upcoming three-year assignment. Thank you again for your fine work and willingness to dig in on behalf of the Richard Pousette-Dart House.

On behalf of the Pousette-Dart family,

Sincerely,

Jon Pousette-Dart



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ERIK KULLESEID**  
Commissioner

4 November 2019

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following six nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Amsterdam Free Library, Amsterdam, Montgomery County  
First Presbyterian Church of Watkins Glen, Watkins Glen, Schuyler County  
Richard Pousette-Dart House and Studio, Suffern, Rockland County  
Clyde Downtown Historic District, Clyde, Wayne County (52 owners, 0 objections)  
Boarding House at 72-74 Sycamore Street, Buffalo, Erie County  
Polvino Building, Rochester, Monroe County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office