



# New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Division for Historic Preservation  
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Andrew M. Cuomo  
Governor  
Rose Harvey  
Commissioner

## RESOURCE EVALUATION

DATE: November 6, 2017

STAFF: Jennifer Betsworth

PROPERTY: Brooks Park House and Studios

MCD: East Hampton

ADDRESS: 128 Neck Path

COUNTY: Suffolk

PROJECT REF: 17NR00107

USN: 10303.000848-850

- I.  Property is individually listed on SR/NR:  
name of listing:
- Property is a contributing component of a SR/NR district:  
name of district:
- II.  Property meets eligibility criteria.  
 Property contributes to a district which appears to meet eligibility criteria.  
Pre SRB:  Post SRB:  SRB date

### Criteria for Inclusion in the National Register:

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

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

The Brooks Park House and Studios are significant under Criterion A in the area of art for its association with abstract expressionist artists James Brooks (1906-1992) and Charlotte Park (1918-2010). After studying at Southern Methodist University and the Dallas Art Institute, Brooks moved to New York City in 1926. He jumped into New York's artistic community, enrolling in the Art Students League, and found work doing lettering for magazines. Much of his early work was in the popular social realist style, including the murals he completed during his work for the WPA Federal Art project (1936-1942) and his work as an art correspondent for the US Army in Cairo (1942-45). Charlotte Park, who had studied at the Yale School of Fine Arts, met James Brooks during her work as a graphic artist for the Office of Strategic Services during the war. In 1945, they both moved to New York City where Brooks reconnected with friends in the New York City art scene, including Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston, and Bradley Walker Tomlin.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, both Brooks and Park began experimenting with cubist and abstract art. After

Jackson Pollock and his wife, Lee Krasner, established a studio in East Hampton, Brooks and Park followed; In 1949, they bought a property further east in Montauk. By 1951, when participated in the *Ninth Street Show*, Brooks was recognized as a leading Abstract Expressionist painter. He softened his more rigid cubist style and began exploring staining, free brushwork, layered canvases, and small, irregular shapes. Within the decade, his work was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art and he had received awards from the Carnegie Institute and the Art Institute of Chicago. During this time, Park taught children's art classes at private schools and at the Museum of Modern Art, had her first solo show at the Tanager Gallery in 1957, and began to be featured in group exhibitions. Her work, which has gained more recognition in recent years, is known for its lyrical contours, bright colors, and playfulness with light and color.

After their Montauk studio was destroyed by Hurricane Carol in 1954, Brooks and Park bought property in Springs, closer to Pollock and Krasner, and had their Montauk house and shed moved to the property in 1957. Around the same time, Brooks purchased the former Wainscott post office and moved it to the property as his first studio. The modest building, which was unsuited to the large-scale works he preferred, was intended to be temporary. In December 1959, a building permit was issued for the construction of a studio of his own design. After the building was completed, Brooks worked exclusively in Springs; during his later career, his work is marked by simpler, but still colorful. Park initially used the shed as her studio, and took over the former post office by the mid-1960s. While the couple traveled back and forth between Springs and New York City during the 1960s and 70s, primarily to accommodate Brooks' teaching schedule, their property in Springs increasingly became their primary residence. The couple continued living and working at their home and studios in Springs through their deaths in 1992 and 2010. The buildings have sat vacant since that time, and have become the focus of an effort to restore them and interpret the lives and works of the two artists and their contemporaries.

The 11-acre Brooks Park property includes four buildings: the house, shed, Brooks' studio, and Park's studio. The interiors of all buildings remain intact, retaining original shelving, built-in cabinetry, and, in some cases, furnishings, paint cans, and materials.

The house is made up of three primary sections: the cottage moved from Montauk (center), a 1971 addition (west), and a 1980s addition (east); the entire building rests on a concrete foundation. The one-story, side-gabled cottage is covered in wood shakes and has a center brick chimney. The 1971 addition is one-story, though greater in height than the cottage, cross-gabled and covered in clapboard siding, and the 1980 addition is one-story, side-gabled and covered in wood shakes. While all of the windows have been boarded up, they do remain intact.

The shed is a one-story, one-bay by two-bay, front-gabled frame building sitting on concrete blocks. It is covered in clapboard siding, is lit by a few small windows and a skylight, and has a simple board-and-batten door.

Brooks' studio is a one-story L-shaped building covered in large asbestos tiles and aluminum siding. The primary section of the building, which housed the studio space, has two large sawtooth light monitors oriented toward the north and a clerestory band of square windows; some of the wall panels are designed to open for additional light and ventilation. The secondary section, which was used for canvas storage, has a shed roof and a clerestory band of rectangular windows.

Park's studio is a three-bay by two-bay side-gabled frame building sitting on a concrete foundation. It is covered in clapboard siding, is lit by one large window, small windows, and a skylight, and has wood panel and glass doors dating to its original use as the Wainscott post office.

If you have any questions concerning this Determination of Eligibility, please contact Jennifer Betsworth at [Jennifer.Betsworth@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Betsworth@parks.ny.gov) or (518) 268-2189.