About the cover art  

Karyn Olivier’s School Is Out (2019) is a public art project in Stenton Park’s recreation center. Located in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, the recreation center sits next to the Stenton, a historic house museum, home of statesman, politician, justice, scholar, and slave owner James Logan. A large blackboard installed on one outdoor wall of the building is the focal point. Invented around the early nineteenth century, the blackboard has served as an efficient, essential, and economical tool for teaching in the classroom. But a blackboard can also, in the words of the artist, “take infinite forms—a site for poetry or prose . . . or a place for fleeting thoughts and urgent inquiries.” On the ground in front of the blackboard, Olivier has installed twenty engraved pavers. Each paving stone features a quote by a local historical figure, including Anthony Benezet (abolitionist, Quaker, and founder of the Negro School of Philadelphia), Richard Allen (a former slave who established the first African American religious denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in 1816), and Lucretia Mott (abolitionist, social reformer, and cofounder of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society, one of the few racially integrated anti-slavery societies in the antebellum era). Olivier also includes quotes by Logan on a few of the paving stones. Olivier’s goal was for the engraved pavers to serve as “a place for individual reflection on the potent quotes indelibly set in stone,”—in conjunction with the blackboard “creating a communal social space for debate and discourse.” Over time, the blackboard becomes a palimpsest and “a literal bridging of the past with the present [in which] new thoughts penned by park users may embellish or counter the ideas permanently adhered.” School Is Out was commissioned by Philadelphia’s Percent for Art Program and the city’s Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy.

Karyn Olivier is a Philadelphia-based artist and educator who works across a range of media including public art, sculpture, photography, and installations. In 2017 Olivier installed a large-scale commissioned work for Monument Lab in historic Vernon Park. In 2015 Olivier created public works for Creative Time in Central Park and New York City’s Percent for Art program. She received the 2018–19 Rome Prize and has been the recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award, the New York Foundation for the Arts Award, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation grant, the William H. Johnson Prize, the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Award, a Creative Capital Foundation grant, and a Harpo Foundation grant. Olivier is currently an associate professor of sculpture at the Tyler School of Art and Architecture at Temple University.


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Cover
Karyn Olivier
School Is Out, 2019
Blackboard and twenty engraved pavers
Stenton Park, Philadelphia
Percent for Art commission
Courtesy of the artist