

Artwork history



Bruce Nauman

None Sing Neon Sign, 1970

Ruby-red and cool-white neon

Edition 6/6

13 x 24 1/4 x 1 1/2 inches (33.02 x 61.6 x 3.81 cm)

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Panza Collection, 1991

91.3825

Cat. rais. no. 184 (*Bruce Nauman: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 1994)

Provenance:

Leo Castelli Gallery, New York (Castelli no. LC-101); Galerie Ileana Sonnabend, Paris, 1970; sold to Giuseppe and Giovanna Panza, Milan and Varese, 1970 (Panza no. BN-27); sold to the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1991.

No related drawings in Guggenheim collection.¹

Fabrication in Guggenheim storage:

- 1) Top section: 1970 fabrication, with later restorations; bottom section: refabricated by Jacob Fishman in 2013
- 2) 2005 fabrication by Fishman
- 3) 2006 fabrication by Fishman
- 4) 2013/2019 fabrication by Fishman

Other editions:

- Edition 1/6 – Private Collection, Milan
- Edition 2/6 – Peter Brandt, Greenwich, CT
- Edition 3/6 – Private Collection, Ticino, Switzerland
- Edition 4/6 – Sonnabend Collection
- Edition 5/6 – Sylvio Perlstein, Antwerp

¹ The 1980 Baltimore *Neons* catalogue and Coosje Van Bruggen's 1986 drawings cat. rais. list one related drawing for this work (p. 60, no. 10; and p. 172, no. 171, respectively) but its current location is unknown, and it has never been reproduced.

History

This work was first exhibited at the Princeton Art Museum in May 1970 (*American Art since 1960*). It is not clear which edition number was lent.² Giuseppe Panza purchased his edition (6/6) from Ileana Sonnabend sometime between late June 1970—when Sonnabend reported receiving the object in Paris³—and mid-November 1970, when Nauman confirmed Panza’s ownership by signing the back of the black-and-white photograph of the work that appeared in the Princeton catalogue (**fig. 1**). The object the Guggenheim received from Panza, however, shows several subtle differences in shape from the version in the Princeton reproduction. The Baltimore Art Museum’s important 1982 exhibition of Nauman’s neons featured yet another edition number (4/6) belonging to Sonnabend herself (**fig. 2**). The accompanying catalogue included a color photograph of an unidentified edition, credited to the same photographer as the black-and-white image Panza received, but evincing subtle differences from that fabrication (**fig. 3**).



Figure 1: Black-and-white photograph by Eric Pollitzer, edition number not identified. Verso has photographer stamp, Castelli Gallery stamp, with handwritten description of the work; and artist’s signed statement, “This piece is in the collection of Dr. Panza” (Nov. 14, 1970).

² When contacted in 2013, registrars at Princeton were unable to locate images from the exhibition.

³ June 20, 1970 letter from Sonnabend to Panza, copy in Guggenheim curatorial file.



Figure 2: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983. (Sonnabend's edition #4). Photo courtesy Baltimore Museum.



Figure 3: Color reproduction in Baltimore *Neons* exhibition catalogue (1982). Photo: Eric Pollitzer. Edition # unknown.

There are indications that Panza may have lent this object to one or more of the European venues of Nauman's 1972–74 retrospective, but this remains to be confirmed. By the mid or late-1970s, Panza had installed the work at his villa at Varese (**fig. 4**). In 1979, Panza lent it to an exhibition at the Rotondo della Besana, Milan, *Testuale: Le Parole e le immagini*. Black-and-white photographs show that there it was installed with the two sections flipped ("neon sign" above and "none sing" below) (**fig. 5**). A photograph of this reverse configuration was published in Germano Celant's 1980 catalogue of Panza's collection. This incorrect installation of the 1970 fabrication was repeated in a 1989 exhibition of Panza's collection at the Musée d'Art Moderne de Saint-Étienne (**fig. 6**).

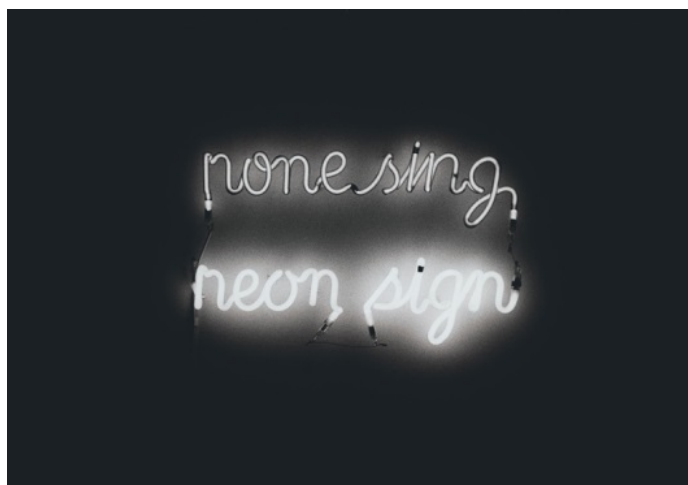


Figure 4: Panza's edition (presumably object received from Sonnabend) installed at Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza, Varese . Photo: Giorgio Colombo, 1976,

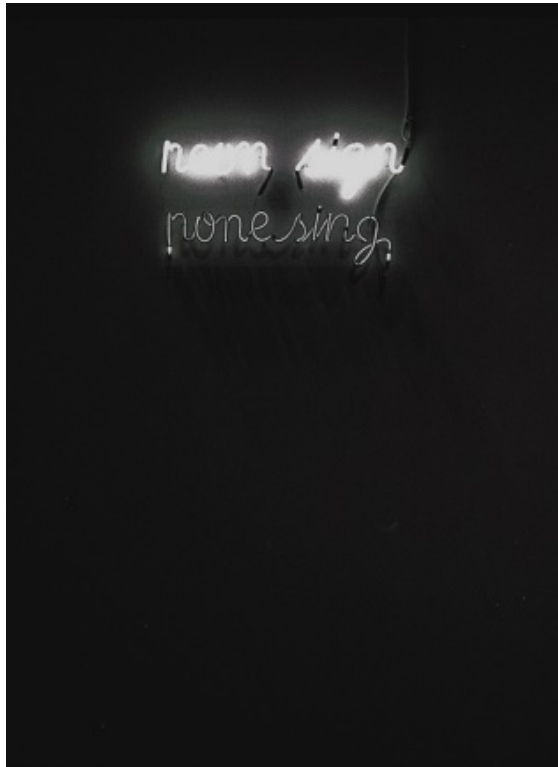


Figure 5: Rotunda della Bresana, Milan, 1979 (elements reversed). Photo: Giorgio Colombo

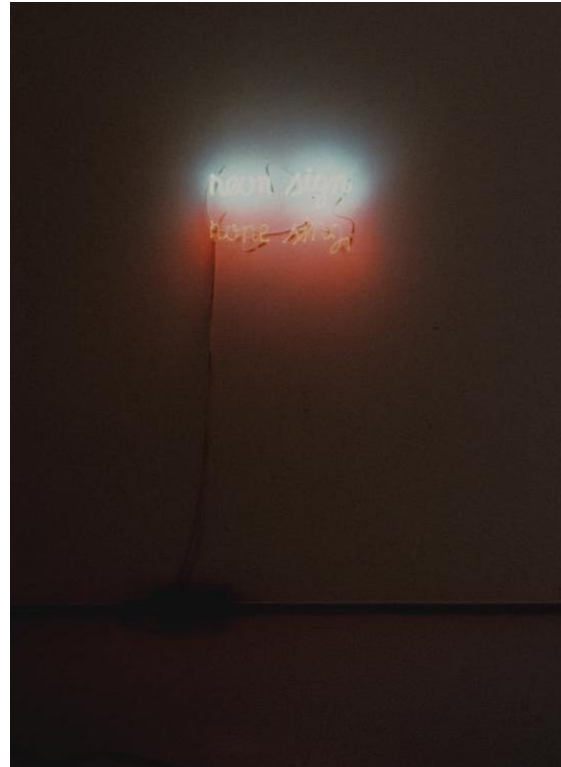


Figure 6: Musée d'Arte Moderne de Saint-Étienne, 1989 (elements reversed). Photo: Giorgio Colombo

For another exhibition of Panza's collection, at the Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, in 1988 (*Arte Minimal de la Colección Panza*), an exhibition copy was fabricated. The colors of the two sections in this fabrication were reversed (“neon sign” in white and “none sing” in red) and—also in contrast to the first version—there were separations between the bottom as well as the top words (**figs. 7, 8**). There is no record of what happened to this exhibition copy; it was presumably destroyed following the close of the exhibition in Madrid. Later reproductions of images of the fabrication at the Reina Sofía, however, have perpetuated confusion about the work.⁴

⁴ The 1988 Madrid photograph has been published in past editions of the Guggenheim *A to Z* collection handbook, among other catalogs. (See list of publications below)



Figures 7 and 8: Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, 1988 (exhibition copy with colors reversed; subsequently destroyed). Photos: Rafael Lobato (left); Giorgio Colombo (right).

What is believed to be the original 1970 fabrication—albeit with some later repairs—was shipped to the Guggenheim in 1990. Following its exhibition at MASS MoCA in 1999–2000 (**fig. 9**), the white “neon” section was damaged; it was discarded, and a replacement with a bluish cast was fabricated by Let There Be Neon, Inc., New York. This version was shown once more, at the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, in 2000–2001 (*Percepciones en transformación. La Colección Panza del Museo Guggenheim*) (**fig. 10**). It was subsequently retired because of a damaged electrode.



Figure 9: MASS MoCA, North, Adams, MA, 1999



Figure 10: Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, 2000

For a 2005 loan to Pace Wildenstein Gallery (*Logical Conclusions: 40 Years of Rule-Based Art*), the Guggenheim had a new exhibition copy produced by Jacob Fishman, Nauman’s regular neon fabricator since 1983. Fishman created this copy without seeing the original in person; as a reference, rather, he used the color reproduction in the 1983 Baltimore catalogue (**fig. 3**), which—as he later explained to the PCI team, in 2013—he considers the authoritative guide.⁵ Whereas the deep red of the original object was achieved through tinted glass—which Fishman has since identified as “American Ruby”—without an interior coating, the 2005 fabrication is made of clear glass with an opaque interior coating, which is lighter orange-red in hue (**fig. 11**). The white section in this exhibition copy, which also has an opaque inner coating, is warmer in color than that of the original. Additionally, the diameter of the glass tubing was smaller than that of the 1970 fabrication (10 mm rather than 12 mm).

The 2005 copy was subsequently lent to the Milwaukee Art Museum’s traveling exhibition, *Elusive Signs: Bruce Nauman Works with Light* (2006–7; see full list of venues and dates below) (**fig. 12**). In 2009, as part of Nauman’s contribution to the Venice Biennale, this copy was installed in a stairwell landing at the Università Ca Foscari (**fig. 13**),



Figure 11: Jacob Fishman fabrication (2005), in Guggenheim storage, lights off



Figure 12: Milwaukee Art Museum, 2006 (2005 fabrication by Jacob Fishman)

⁵ Feb. 22, 2013 interview with Fishman, Panza Collection Initiative.



Figure 13: Università Ca Foscari Biennale di Venezia, 2009 (2005 fabrication by Fishman)

In 2006, with the Nauman studio's permission, the Guggenheim arranged for Fishman to fabricate a second copy so that the work could be shown in the museum's traveling exhibition, *Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation* (National Art Museum of China, Beijing, Feb.–April 2007; Shanghai Art Museum, May – April 2007; The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, June – Sept. 2007; and the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, Oct. 2007 – April 2008). Fishman's 2006 copy (**fig. 14**) is virtually identical to his 2005 copy, although the white of "neon sign" is slightly warmer in the later version.

Finally, in 2007 Fishman fabricated an exhibition copy for the Des Moines Art Center's exhibition *Sign Language*, which was destroyed upon the close of the show (**fig. 15**).



Figure 14: 2006 exhibition copy by Jacob Fishman, photographed in Guggenheim photo studio



Figure 15: 2007 exhibition copy by Jacob Fishman (destroyed)

In February 2013, the PCI team conducted an extensive interview at the Guggenheim warehouse with Fishman while examining the three extant fabrications: the original 1970 fabrication, with later replacements and repairs, and the two exhibition copies by Fishman, which in material and appearance more closely resemble the neon works Nauman produced later in his career.

At the Guggenheim's request, Fishman subsequently repaired the broken electrode on the 1970 fabrication and fabricated a new, uniform white section ("NONE SING"). Additionally, the museum had Fishman fabricate an entirely new, fourth copy using the same type of uncoated red glass found in the original (and consistent in the diameter of the tubing). Francesca Esmay traveled to Fishman's studio (Lightwriters, Inc., Chicago, IL) in May 2013 in order to document the process of fabrication in video and photographs and to question Fishman further about his practice in regard to Nauman's neons.⁶

For the July 2013 Panza Collection Advisory Committee Meeting on Nauman, this new fabrication was installed alongside the restored and partially refabricated 1970 fabrication and the 2005 and 2006 fabrications for a revealing side-by-side comparison (**figs. 16–25**).

⁶ The recordings and transcriptions of both this interview and the February 2013 interview with Fishman in New York are accessible in the Panza Collection Initiative Records, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives.

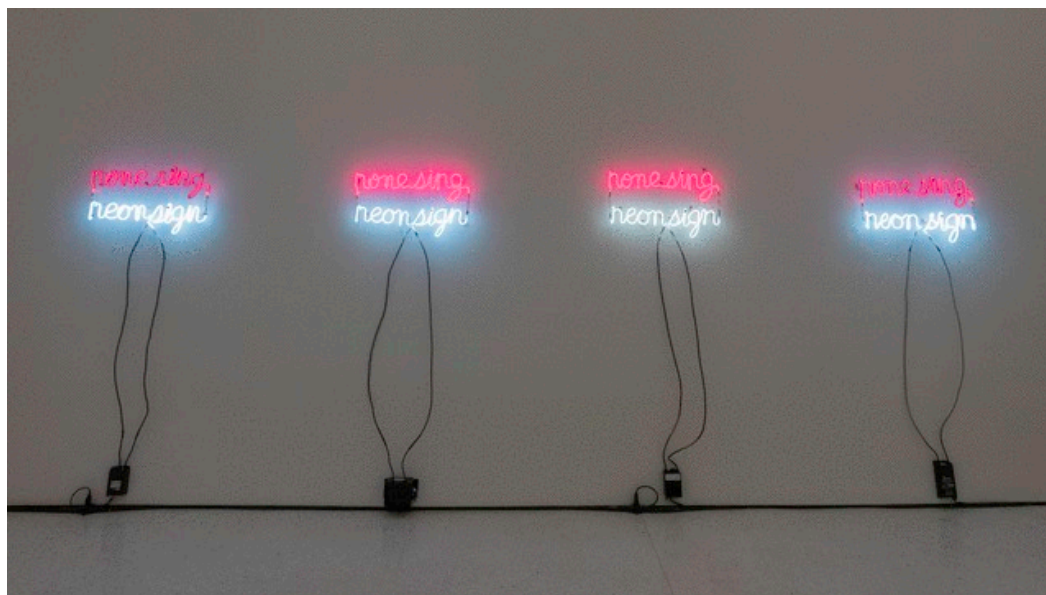


Figure 16: four fabrications installed together for study purposes, at the July 2013 PCI Advisory Committee Meeting (not open to the public). This and the following photos: Kristopher McKay, SRGM

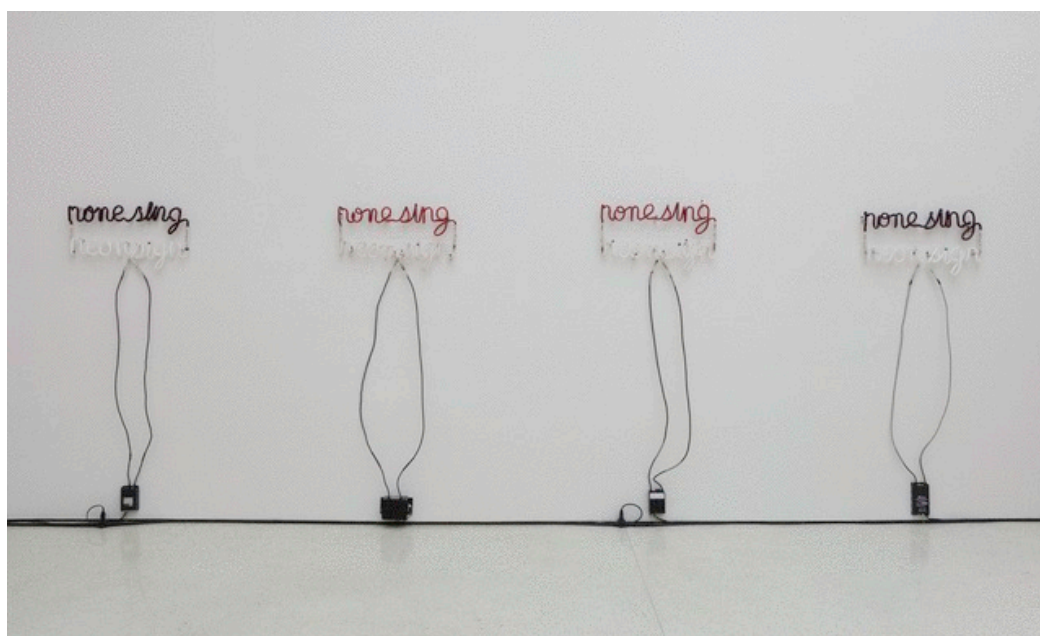


Figure 17: view with the lights turned off



Figures 18, 19: 1970 fabrication with restorations; bottom section is a 2013 refabrication by Jacob Fishman (these and the below photos are from the 2013 PCI Advisory Committee meeting)



Figures 20, 21: 2005 fabrication by Jacob Fishman



Figures 22, 23: 2006 fabrication by Jacob Fishman



Figures 24, 25: 2013 fabrication by Jacob Fishman

In 2018, part of Fishman’s 2013 fabrication was damaged while the work was in transit to the Schaulager Basel venue of *Bruce Nauman: Disappearing Acts* (March 17 – August 26): the word “Sign” in the lower white section suffered two breaks on either side of the “g” (**fig. 26**). At Fishman’s recommendation, and under the supervision of SRGM courier Francesca Esmay, a temporary replacement for “Sign” was made by a local Swiss neon fabricator so that the work could be included in the exhibition (**figs. 27, 28**). The work was removed, however, from the subsequent New York venue of the exhibition.



Figure 26: broken “g” element upon unpacking of the crate at Schaulager in 2019



Figure 27: temporary replacement at Schaulager, Basel, 2018

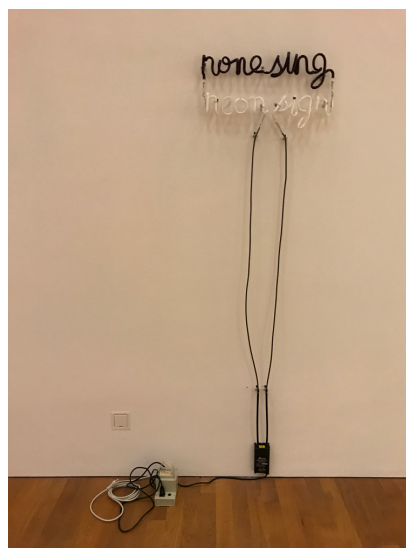


Figure 28: temporary replacement unlit, during installation at Schaulager, 2018

Panza Collection Initiative records (A0071), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York
Bruce Nauman, *None Sing Neon Sign*, 1970 (91.3825)
Artwork history, last updated Dec. 2021

In early 2019 Jacob Fishman fabricated a replacement for the damaged “Sign” section. This was received by the Guggenheim in time to be included with the rest of Fishman’s 2013 fabrication in a display of selected artworks in the Guggenheim’s Tower 7 during the course of the two day symposium *Object Lessons: The Panza Collection Initiative Symposium* (April 9–10, 2019). As was done at the 2013 Advisory Committee meeting, all four extant versions of the work were installed side-by-side for comparison (**fig. 29**). This display was not open to the general public, only to symposium attendees.



Figure 29: installation of four versions for display in conjunction with *Object Lessons: The Panza Collection Initiative Symposium*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, April 9–10, 2019

Panza Collection Initiative records (A0071), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York
Bruce Nauman, *None Sing Neon Sign*, 1970 (91.3825)
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Exhibitions

[Villa Menafoglio Litta Panza, Varese, 1970 fabrication installed by 1972; de-installed by 1991.]

Rotonda della Besana, Milan, *Testuale: Le Parole e Le Immagini*, June–September 1979. (1970 fabrication received by Panza from Castelli/Sonnabend, installed with two sections reversed.) Catalogue: p. 145, b/w ill. (view of work with two sections reversed; “Neon sign none sing”).

Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, *Arte Minimal de la Colección Panza*, March 24 – Dec. 31, 1988. (Incorrect exhibition copy fabricated, with top and bottom colors reversed.) Catalogue: p. 53, color ill. (Reina Sofía installation view); p. 61.

Musée d’Art Moderne de Saint-Étienne, St-Priest-en-Jarez, France, *La collection Panza: Richard Long, Bruce Nauman*, June 29 – September 6, 1989. (Incorrect 1988 fabrication copy.) Accompanied by *L’art des Années Soixante et Soixant-Dix: La Collection Panza*, 1989 French edition of *Art of the Sixties and Seventies: the Panza*, 1988 (see “Other published references,” below).

Mass MoCA, North Adams, *Test Site* [Pre-inaugural exhibition], May 27, 1999 – April 30, 2000. Organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. (Fabrication received from Panza.) No catalogue.

Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, *Percepciones en transformación de la Colección Panza del Museo Guggenheim (Changing Perceptions: The Panza Collection at the Guggenheim Museum)* Oct. 10, 2000 – Apr. 22 2001. (Fabrication received from Panza.) Not in catalogue.

Pace Wildenstein Gallery, New York, *Logical Conclusions: 40 Years of Rule-Based Art*, Feb. 18 – March 26, 2005. (Jacob Fishman fabrication was created and lent.) Catalogue: pp. 92–93, color ill. (view of incorrect 1988 Reina Sofía exhibition copy).

Milwaukee Art Museum, *Elusive Signs: Bruce Nauman Works with Light*, Jan. 28 – April 9, 2006. Traveled to Indianapolis Museum of Art, May 14 – August 6, 2006; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Oct. 14, 2006 – Jan. 7, 2007; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Feb. 10 – May 6, 2007; Musée d’Art Contemporain de Montréal, June 22 – August 20, 2007; Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh, Sept. 22 – Dec. 4, 2007; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, May 24 – August 31, 2008. (2005 Jacob Fishman copy lent.) Catalogue: p. 24, color ill. (view of incorrect 1988 Reina Sofía exhibition copy); p. 25.

National Art Museum of China, Beijing, *Art in America: 300 Years of Innovation*, Feb. 10, 2007 – April 5, 2007. Organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Traveled to Shanghai Art Museum, May 1 – June 30, 2007; The State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, June 24 – Sept. 9, 2007; Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Oct. 8, 2007 – April 27, 2008. (New exhibition copy fabricated by Jacob Fishman in 2006.) Catalogue.

Des Moines Art Center, *Sign Language*, August 24 – Nov. 23, 2007. (New exhibition copy fabricated by Jacob Fishman, destroyed upon close of show.) Booklet only.

Panza Collection Initiative records (A0071), Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York
Bruce Nauman, *None Sing Neon Sign*, 1970 (91.3825)
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Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, Italy, *Bruce Nauman: Topological Gardens*, 53rd Biennale di Venezia, June 7 – Oct. 15, 2009. Organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art. (2005 Jacob Fishman fabrication.) Catalogue: p. 93; p. 128, color ill. (view of 2005 Fishman fabrication).

Schaulager Basel, Switzerland, *Bruce Nauman: Disappearing Acts*, March 17 – August 26, 2018. Co-organized with The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the work did not participate in the New York venue of the exhibition. (2013 Jacob Fishman fabrication.) Catalogue: p. 162, color ill. (2013 Fishman fabrication); pp. 163, 301; pp. 306–7, color ill. (2013 view of four versions installed together for study purposes).

Other published references

Jane Livingston and Marcia Tucker, *Bruce Nauman: Work from 1965 to 1972* (Exh. cat., LACMA and Whitney), p. 43; not illustrated.

Germano Celant, *Das Bild einer Geschichte 1956/1976, Die Sammlung Panza di Biumo / Die Geschichte eines Bildes: Action painting, Newdada, Pop art, Minimal art, Conceptual and Environmental art* (Milano: Electa International, 1980), p. 300, b/w ill. (view of incorrect installation with top and bottom sections flipped).

Coosje van Bruggen, *Bruce Nauman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 112; p. 153, color ill. (photo of different edition published in Baltimore 1982 *Bruce Nauman: Neons* catalogue).

Art of the Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), p. 185 (b/w ill. (Pollitzer photo published in 1970 Princeton cat.)).

Nancy Spector (ed.), *Guggenheim Museum A to Z* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1st edition, 1992), p. 194 (color ill., view of incorrect 1988 Madrid exhibition copy).

Joan Simon (ed.), *Bruce Nauman: Exhibition Catalogue and Catalogue Raisonné* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1994), p. 247, b/w ill. (Pollitzer photo published in 1970 Princeton catalogue).

Art of the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies: The Panza Collection (Milan: Editoriale Jaca Book; Wappingers' Falls, N.Y.: Antique Collectors' Club, 1999), p. 225, b/w ill. (Pollitzer photo published in 1970 Princeton catalogue).

Peter Plagens, *Bruce Nauman: The True Artist* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2014), p. 143, color ill. (photo of different edition published in Baltimore 1982 *Bruce Nauman: Neons* catalogue).

Francesca Esmay, Ted Mann, and Jeffrey Weiss, *Object Lessons: Case Studies in Minimal Art—The Guggenheim Panza Collection Initiative* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 2021), p. 21, color ill. (2013 view of four versions installed together for study purposes).