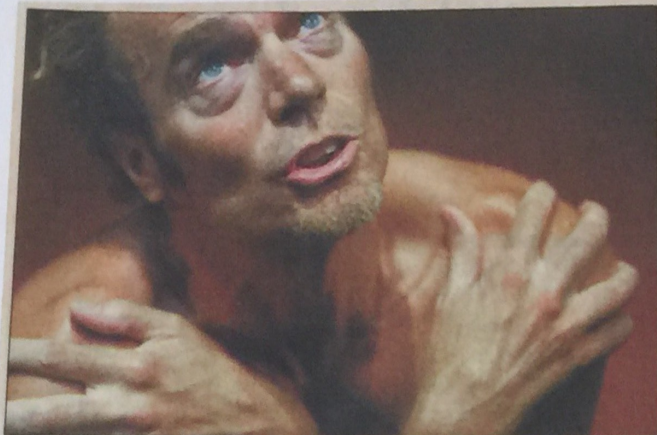


The Naked Truth, Preview, Star Tribune, 2001



Star Tribune photo by Stormi Greener
Patrick Scully bares all as he describes winter at local nude beaches. In "The Naked Truth," he promises more clothing-optional beaches if he's elected mayor.

Patrick Scully's undress rehearsal

By Graydon Royce
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Now that he's leaving the eponymous cabaret he has fronted for 16 years, is Patrick Scully shrinking from the limelight?

Judge for yourself. This weekend in Illusion Theater's Fresh Ink series, Scully unveils a performance piece that sounds very much like an announcement for a Minneapolis mayoral candidacy. Although wrapped in fiction, the piece uses Scully's nonfiction struggles with city bureaucracy to create a visionary point of view.

The Naked Truth

- **Who:** Patrick Scully. Directed by Ben Kreilkamp.
- **Where:** Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Av., Mpls.
- **When:** 8 p.m. Thu.-Sat.; 7 p.m. next Sun.
- **Tickets:** \$10. 612-339-4944.

"It's about dreaming about what this city could be rather than dealing with potholes and tax-incremental financing districts," he said.

SCULLY continues on F4:

— Instead of fighting city hall, he wants to be city hall.

Champion of many causes says he'd be visionary mayor

Called "The Naked Truth," the performance is Scully's first full-length piece since "Forever Hold Your Piece" at Illusion four years ago. He's been poking away at the script for a long time, letting it take shape in the crucible of his own experience as he's fought city hall as a small-business owner, theater presenter, avid biker and nude-beach aficionado.

His tribulations built to the point where he said he felt like Job, and finally decided, "You know, instead of fighting city hall, I'm just going to be city hall."

Scully turned up the heat on his dreams after Jesse Ventura was elected governor.

"I figured if a former professional wrestler could be governor, why not a gay, naked, HIV-positive performance artist as mayor?" he said.

After a year of rumors that Scully might run for mayor, he now confirms that he intends to file and run in the September primary.

"If 'Almanac' wants to interview me with the other candidates, I'll come on down," he said.

Scully never has shied from controversy. His cabaret, which he has run in several locations, including his home, over the past 16 years, has been a beacon of diverse, multicultural theater, dance, performance and song. In 1993, the small club gained national notoriety when performance artist Ron Athey sliced into an accomplice's back and dabbed with the blood with paper towels, which Athey then sent out on a clothesline over the audience. Because Athey was HIV-positive (the accomplice was not) and because the piece was sponsored by Walker Art Center and used money from the National Endowment for the

Arts, the incident became a *cause célèbre*.

Stepping away, Scully said, makes sense at this time.

"I'm more an inventor than a manager," he said. "I feel like the cabaret is in a healthy, strong place and provides for the community. Rather than try to reinvent it, it's time to move on and discover what I'm going to invent next."

He will stay at the cabaret until Oct. 1. By then, he'll know whether he was one of two mayoral candidates chosen to run in the November election. If not, he's "free as a bird."

Scully has championed causes as diverse as gay rights, small-business freedom, bicycle mobility and accessibility to nude beaches. As he's chafed under the city's collar and fumed at its foibles, he has become bolder and more open about his intentions regarding public office.

"If the mayor's really a figurehead, then what's the best thing for a figurehead to be?" he asked. "A figurehead should be a visionary. Let the City Council run the city, and I'm going to think about the city in the year 2050 and figure out how to get us from where we are to where we oughtta be."

Fear and desire

"The Naked Truth," in addition to being a political treatise, deals with the choices people make based on fear or desire. Up until a week ago his working title was "Moving Toward Desire."

"When you engage in civil disobedience," Scully said, "that's really about making that choice to acknowledge your desire rather than to operate out of fear of the law."

He asked Ben Kreilkamp, a local playwright and actor steeped in experimental the-



Photo by Ann Heisenfelt

Patrick Scully frames the old Firehouse Theatre in Minneapolis, which an anonymous donor bought to house Patrick's Cabaret.

ater, to help him with this project.

"I'm dramaturging," said Kreilkamp. "He really directs himself because he's so experienced as a performer."

Kreilkamp, who has known Scully since the 1970s, finds the 6-foot-8 dancer an interesting artist, one who likes putting reality on stage "in an unadorned manner. His honesty is the essence of his creative work."

Legendary for his desire to

get naked, Scully won't disappoint with this performance. Nudity is the perfect metaphor for fear and desire, he said.

"It's a very profoundly political thing for me to be on stage and be there naked and comfortable in my nakedness and be 47 years old."

— Graydon Royce is at
groyce@startribune.com.