



Photo by Dallas Drake

Patrick Scully incorporates safer sex posters into his latest performance piece *Illumination*.

Everything you wanted to know about AIDS and sex

Illuminations Review

• ***Illumination* by Patrick Scully**
 • Patrick's Cabaret, 506 E. 24th St., Minneapolis
 • Friday, May 10—Sunday 12 at 8 p.m.
 • Information (612) 871-4257

By William Randall Beard

With the pronouncement "I'm not dead yet!" performer Patrick Scully will launch into his latest performance art piece *Illumination*.

Partially funded by an ARTS over AIDS Commissioning Grant, the work is Scully's exploration of having lived with HIV for the past six years.

Scully has been a highly visible openly gay artist for many years. Last month, *Patrick's Cabaret*, a monthly performance opportunity for local gay artists, celebrated its fifth anniversary. It is in the context of the Cabaret that *Illumination* will be performed. That connection is important to Scully, because "it's about taking risks with an audience that's supportive and not sitting in judgement."

Scully takes many risks with this piece. Informed by his HIV status and his own sexual history, the work contains many of his perspectives on the language of AIDS and eroticism. It also explores the reality of white male privilege that he finds

removed when he is open about his being HIV positive or gay.

Scully warns that anyone offended by explicit material should not come to *Illumination*. "There are doors that are closed to me because of the [gay] content of my work or the experimental forms," said Scully. "One of the liberating things about that is I don't feel beholden to anybody and I can do the work as I want to do it. I'm committed to that. It's the only way to do it."

Scully is frank when he discusses how language reflects society's "anti-sexual" attitude. "When angry, people say, 'Fuck you!' What a confused message about sexuality that is! Sex becomes both passionate and destructive."

He also points to the use of "prick" or "cunt" or "asshole" as perjorative. In *Illumination*, he wants to look at that kind of language and turn it around, like he has in the past with "fag" and "queer."

"I'm rather fond of assholes, mine and other men's," he said. "To use it as a put down is not affirming of my sexuality."

While most of Scully's work in the past has been improvisational, this piece will be even more so. "I have a pretty open-ended agenda," he said.

Through talk and dance, film and other visuals, he will put out lots of images, words and emotions in a per-

formance that may be different each evening. "I may give a five minute lecture, show a film or spend a half hour moving in silence," he said.

Scully has been doing "research" for *Illumination* by doing three other performances, at the No Name Gallery, the Heart of the Beast late night showcase, and the University YMCA's Artists in Peace series.

When preparing for a performance, he goes through the material in his journal, reads through a list of men who have died, and meditates. Where that meditation leads determines the nature of each performance. "It's all about staying emotionally grounded in the moment," Scully said.

Another significant element of this work will be the use of safer sex posters—images created by others about safe sex, which Scully categorizes as "the good, the bad and the ugly." His major complaint about much of this work is the failure of safer sex to be eroticized. As he phrased it, "the problem with safe sex is that it's unwilling to be dirty."

Although he has tackled AIDS issues often in the past, including the piece *Too Soon Lost* which he has performed for several years, Scully says that his perspective has changed over time. At the time he created *Too Soon Lost*, he was not open about being HIV positive, and dealt with the impact of AIDS primarily through its impact on others.

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However, "this piece is speaking very much in first person singular."

According to Scully, the work is "all about how the world seems different to me than it would if I were not HIV positive."

Scully is more than a little intimidated by the prospect of *Illumination*. "Going on stage for an hour or more by myself with no idea what I'm going to do, it may come out jumbled or all of a piece. I don't know."

Yet, he cautions audiences that they may not digest all his material at any one performance. But he is also excited. "Courage isn't real unless it's intimidating," Scully said.