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▼▼▼HOUSTON LIVE **Queer Thinking, Too Soon Lost, Timepiece,** **Houston 1993 The New New Voice** Performance artist Patrick Scully brings wry, poignant humor to Houston

By JAVIER TAMEZ

The New Voice/Houston

The promotional material distributed by DiverseWorks on performer Patrick Scully bills him as being a "performance artist, dancer, film maker, writer, advocate for gay rights, and HIV positive." While all of that is certainly true, such a description might lead the less politically inclined to avoid what promises to be an outstanding evening of theater from a man The New York Times referred to as a "gifted original."

In "Queer Notions," which is being presented by DiverseWorks as part of "Beyond Desire," a two-month long gay and lesbian performance and film series, Scully offers an evening of three solo performance works all written by him.

In "Too Soon Lost," Scully gives the history and personality of five run-down buildings in one block of urban decay in Minneapolis, his hometown. He wears a business suit and carries a bunch of flowers as he gives just enough information about each of the buildings to bring them to life. The piece is not really about the buildings, of course, but

rather a metaphor for the slow, wasting away that is far too often the manifestation of the latter stages of AIDS. He underscores this by mentioning a friend that resided in each of the buildings, before the buildings were abandoned, before the friends died of AIDS. It's a powerfully poignant piece.

In "Queer Thinking," Scully reveals a great deal of himself. He puts on a miniskirt and becomes Tonya, a drag queen inspired by Patty Hearst. Barely concealing his essentials, he turns pain, loss and wry misadventures into rousing theater, eventually forsaking any attempt at modesty.

Thus, in the bar- est, most noncha-

lant fashion he delivers anecdotes and observations that primarily lament the either/or choices and divisions that are always thrust upon him. He chafes under the restrictiveness of forms that require him to check either the "male" or "female" box. Without the slightest bit

of fanfare he scrawls across them, "Too few options."

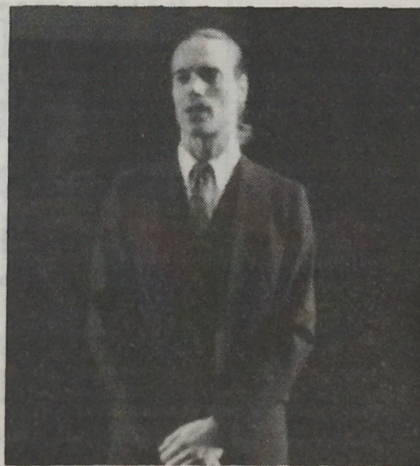
The final work is "Timepiece." Here Scully improvises in front of 12 simultaneous time-lapse films, the performance artist at work without a script.

Scully, who has tested positive for over six years now, makes no apologies for the stridency of his work. "I'm surrounded by a world that has a language in

this epidemic and a set of images in this epidemic that are very death-affirming, not life-affirming. There is no way I can be honest in my work and not have it informed by the struggle that I have to stay healthy and alive and vital in the face of such a strong death wish," he was quoted as saying.

Scully is not dogmatic though, his perspective has altered over time and that is naturally reflected in his work. When he first performed "Too Soon Lost," for instance, he was not yet open about his HIV status, and he dealt with the impact of AIDS through its impact on others. Speaking to a hometown publication, he commented: "This piece is definitely in the first person singular...about how the world seems different to me than it would if I were not HIV positive."

Scully brings a critical, cutting-edge mentality to his work. He knows audiences may not appreciate him after only one performance, but Houston audiences will only get two chances to see him. Scully performs Friday and Saturday, April 16 and 17, at 8:00 p.m. For more information, contact DiverseWorks at 223-8346.



Patrick Scully performs at DiverseWorks