Interview with Patrick Scully
Interviewed by Fraser Nelson
Interviewed July 29, 1994, at Patrick's Cabaret, Minneapolis

FN: Please tell me a little about yourself. Where were you born, and how long have you lived in Minnesota?

PS: My name is Patrick Scully. I was born in Worthington, Minnesota, in October of 1953. And I have lived in Minnesota actually most of my life. Other than a year and a half that I lived in Berlin, and another year and a half in Washington, D.C., and half a year in New York City.

FN: Patrick, how do people describe you?

PS: Well, dance critics have sometimes described me as a gentle giant. Other people have described me as a radical fag. Oh let's see, how else have people described me? Community activist, HIV activist. I am probably best known for my performing work and for running Patrick's Cabaret.¹

FN: When did you first become aware of AIDS? What I am interested in is what did it mean to you then, when you first become aware of HIV?

PS: Well, when I first became aware of something going on that we later came to understand as HIV, I just remember there were reports in gay newspapers in town about this strange disease that seemed to be affecting gay men. That was back in the very early eighties. But it seemed like this very exotic kind of remote thing. It didn't seem like something that was connected to living in Minneapolis as a gay man.

And then, things moved pretty quickly it seemed from that to a period of time where we started to have an understanding of what safe sex was about. Of course, a lot of the early safe sex stuff was very misguided in its impact. Things like

¹A performance art space in Minneapolis.
"Know who you have sex with." It wasn't until safe sex messages started to deal with the importance of using condoms and protecting yourself, particularly in anal sex, that it seemed that there was anything new, anything that applied to me in my life. But it was also about that time that I started to have friends and acquaintances I knew who were getting sick.

**FN:** So thinking back to what AIDS meant to you when you first started having a realization that it existed, to what it means to you now--what has the change been for you over that time?

**PS:** Well, now as somebody who has been living for at least nine years with HIV, it went from being in the beginning this remote seeming--sort of like Legionnaires Disease, you know, it was something that happened in Kentucky or somewhere--to something where now I can't remember the last day that a day went by where I didn't think about the fact that I am HIV positive.

**FN:** When did you first become aware of the impact in your life? Can you give me a sense for how AIDS has impacted you personally?

**PS:** Yes, It really first began to impact me in my own life in the time when I was living in Washington, D.C., and then moved to New York, which would have been ten years ago, in the summer of 1984. It was at that time that I started to realize there's stuff I'm going to need to do to take care of myself. One of the reasons I decided to come back from New York City to Minneapolis was life in New York is really hard. And I just thought that with this epidemic growing the way that it is, I think I don't want to stay in New York City, and just deal with the stress of life on a day-to-day basis, and deal with the huge numbers of people getting sick. It was also easier as an artist to live in Minneapolis. So all of those factors combined helped me to decide to move back here.

It was in the fall of 1985 that I was first tested for HIV, and my first test result was positive, sort of what I expected. Not because I was not feeling well in any way--I felt and still feel fine--it was just my intuition. Then when I first discovered that I was HIV positive was the biggest impact, the biggest single day, in my whole personal
Realizing that I was going to need to figure out my own strategies for how to live with HIV, because I was not aware at that time of any place that I could go to get information that was going to help me figure out how to live with HIV. At that time everything seemed pretty much cloaked in fear and hysteria. So, the nine years since then have really been a process of figuring out how do I live with this, and what do I do to take care of myself, and how do I take action in a larger arena.

**FN:** How did your awareness that you were HIV-infected in a time when there was all that fear--how did you feel at that time? What was your reaction?

**PS:** Well, it was clear to me from things that I had read in immunology even before I knew about AIDS that there is a direct connection between the state of a person’s mind and the strength of their immune system. I knew that the more I could do for myself to not be afraid, to deal with fears that I had as they came up, and to not expect to get sick--I knew that the more that I could do to support that kind of thinking, the healthier I would stay and be. And so I remember doing things that were modeled on things that I remember feminist friends from the seventies doing. Where instead of like talking about the "mail man," they would talk about the "letter carrier." Just simple ways of making the language more gender-neutral. I realized that there was work I was going to need to do to neutralize the language around HIV and around AIDS. So when I would hear somebody on television, a TV news reporter, saying "AIDS, the deadly disease," I would just say to myself, "AIDS is a serious medical condition. These people are participating in a sort of mass psychology attempt to wish everybody who is HIV positive into their grave, and I need to not buy into that."

So there would be like these mantras that I would sort of develop for respeaking the language as I would hear it. That was one of the most important things that I did early on in the epidemic, was to just respeak the language, and say, "HIV means that I have been exposed to this virus. Nobody knows how long I can live with this virus. Nobody knows if I am going to get sick with this or not, but my job is to live with this and be healthy." So in the early years that is what I did.

Also, I did not share my HIV status in the early years with a lot of people because I thought that the general
understanding of the epidemic, the consciousness level, was not at a high enough point where it would be safe for me to share that. Because what I anticipated was that, if I told people, then they would immediately expect I would be getting sick. And then I would be living surrounded by people expecting me to get sick, and I didn't want to have to deal with that kind of energy.

So it wasn't until about four years ago that I felt like there had been enough of a mass evolution of the social consciousness around issues of HIV that I could be public about it without having to worry about people wishing me into my grave consciously or subconsciously by expecting me to be sick.

FN: What about people in the HIV community, other people with AIDS? Did you find the same sort of mind set among those folks as well?

PS: Among the people that I knew who were HIV positive, I think for many of them there was a similar approach, but not identical. I have always believed that each of us needs to figure out our own course through this, and we can definitely find support in what other people do and say. But in the early years, actually, when I was first public about being HIV positive, I was one of the few people I knew who was public about their HIV status who didn't have AIDS. There were people living with AIDS who were public about it, but at that time there were very few people who were HIV positive and asymptomatic and public about it.

FN: I know that a lot of the work that you have done at Patrick's Cabaret and some of your own performances have been around AIDS. How does AIDS fit into your broader commitments? And, if you could, give me sense of the other commitments you have in your life and how AIDS is a part of that.

PS: Whoa--there is a big question. I think a couple of words that to me are very big in terms of my commitment as a human being this life time on the planet are about honesty—that is one commitment. And another big commitment for me is about embracing and celebrating diversity. And so both in the performing work that I do, and in the work that I do as producer and director of Patrick's Cabaret, running the Cabaret I seek out works that I think are honest and that I
think have something unique to say. I try to encourage diversity in as many different directions as I can think of it. Diversity of physical ability—and so I have people who are able-bodied, people who are blind, people who are in wheelchairs perform. I seek out a diversity of age; people in their teens to people in their sixties and seventies have performed here. Diversity of ethnic background, diversity of sexual preference. I believe that we live in a world that's really rich and that the richness of that world is masked by the purported universal that we were raised with, which is white heterosexual middle class existence. And there is room for white, straight, middle class people, but even there, all straight, middle class, white people are not Ward and June Cleaver and living lives that television would have us to believe.

And so HIV and AIDS fit into that by—it's part of the voice that I bring to the work that I do is to talk about it and share information about what it is like for me to live with HIV and how the community of people that are important to me and those who are sick and/or those who have died, about how I deal with that in my life. The biggest change that has happened in all of that for me was at the time that I went public about being HIV positive, I was also able to be public on stage about being HIV positive, and it gave me a lot more room to be angry and rageful and to be able to express that. Which then allowed me to go deeper into feeling the grief that I feel. By taking away the mask of not sharing my HIV status, by being public about that, I think that I became a more whole person and have access to a greater range of my feelings.

**FN:** What about the honesty you talked about?

**PS:** Yeah, well, I remember early on when I first was tested and got my test results, the nurse at Room 111—she was probably well-intentioned—but, you know, she was so misguided, I think, at least in how she dealt with me. Because she was like, "Well, you don't need to tell anybody about this, not your family or your friends." And sort of underneath all of what she was saying was, "You can keep this as your dirty little secret if you want to, and you probably

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2A clinic run by the St. Paul Health Department to deal with sexually transmitted diseases.
need to for insurance company reasons, and only tell your doctor, and of course you can trust your doctors because they will never tell anybody else, and this information will always..."

And the information I got once I left there wasn't too different, you know. I contacted some people about early HIV support groups, and you have to like call this number, and there would be an answering machine, and you had to leave your first name only and your phone number on there, and they would call you back. And I realize that there was a reason for the paranoia that people had, but it wasn't something that I could embrace. I just felt like I haven't lived all these years as an openly gay man to step back into some other closet now that I am HIV positive. So, when I took the test, I took it with my own name, and I just figured that if this goes into some state record and some insurance company gets it and I end up not being able to get insurance, well, I will just figure out how to deal with things. I'm not going to live my life making choices based on a fear of what might happen.

And so that is really where the honesty figures in. It is about making my choices based on what I really want, and being myself in the process of doing that and not making my choices based on what I am afraid might happen.

FN: You talked earlier about the time that you have on earth in this life. Can you talk to me about your faith? How would you define that, and how does that play a role in your current life?

PS: Yes. I believe that there is a certain energy that is me, that is Patrick Scully. I believe that energy has never come together in all the same parts in all the same ways as is me right now. But I also believe that in the same way when I leave this earth there are going to be many people whose lives I have impacted and ways in which I have impacted the planet beyond human lives, whether it be things that I have built or gardens that I have made that have gone back fallow, or whatever. That my having been on this planet makes a difference. And so after the time that I am dead I believe that there will still be my energy here on this planet.

I am not so sure whether my actual energy comes back in a
reincarnated form as some other human being or some other life form or not. I don’t know. That may be possible. But I really believe that there is something that happens in the universe beyond a random interaction of molecules. When I left the Science Museum three years ago, I really did it on an act of faith that if I were doing with my life what I was supposed to do that I would not have to worry and that financially things would work out. And the truth is that I am making more money now than when I left the Science Museum, and doing it as a freelance radical queer performing artist and cabaret director.

And so I often do this gesture where I reach my hands out from me at forty-five degrees and open my palms to the sky and look up to the universe and just say, "The universe provides." And it seems to. I feel like if I do what I am supposed to be doing, and I am conscientious about my work, and take good care of myself and treat my friends generously, that things will work out.

**FN:** Has that evolved for you?

**PS:** I didn’t use to be as aware of that as I am now. And part of it is I think my consciousness in living with HIV is that nobody is guaranteed tomorrow. But I think I am just more conscious of that than many people because I am HIV positive. So I am healthy right now, and I expect that a year from now I will probably be healthy too, but I might not be. I could be dead in a year. And it might not be because of HIV; it could be something else. But that is just part of the consciousness that has grown in me in living with HIV is a sense of my own mortality in this body. And so that helps me to make choices based on what do I really want to do. Because this isn’t a rehearsal that we are in now. This is the show. And so as long as this is the show, I am just going to go for it and do what it is that I want to do and trust that things will work out.

**FN:** What is it that you want to do?

**PS:** Well, I am doing what I want to do. I want to run my cabaret, I want to perform. I want to have time to travel.

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1. Patrick Scully’s final position at the Science Museum of Minnesota was director of public programs, which he held from 1988-1991.
And also I want to be in the relationship that I am in with Djola and pursue this, and enjoy that sense of partnership with somebody else. So yeah, I am in the very fortunate position of being somebody who is doing exactly what he wants to do.

**FN:** You talked about when you first came out as having HIV, and the benefits of being able to perform and how that helped you uncover some anger. Can you talk a little bit about the role that anger plays in your response to HIV or in your broader community?

**PS:** I created a piece called "Too Soon Lost," which is a memorial piece about the demolition of the block in downtown Minneapolis on Hennepin Avenue between 6th and 7th Streets that people refer to as Block E. I generally avoid that name because it seeks to make it a kind of faceless place; it made it easier to tear it down. That piece was a very sad piece and it was a very profound way for me to be able to deal with my grief around friends that I had lost in the epidemic. But a big piece was missing in that nobody knew when I was first performing that piece that not only was I dealing with my grief in that piece, but also I was dealing with my own fears as somebody who is HIV positive.

Well, the first piece I performed after I came out about being HIV positive, I made in this space here a huge mound of dirt that I buried myself in. The dirt was then covered with grass and plants and ferns and everything. It looked like it might be a garden. It also looked like it might be a grave. The audience came in not knowing that I was buried in this mound, and I started the piece by sitting up and saying "I AM NOT DEAD YET," and sort of startling people.

The anger is real helpful to me. Expressing the anger is helpful because there is a lot of stuff I get angry about all the time. If I just sit with that anger and don't express it then I fell like it starts to destroy me from the inside. I also think that there is a power in that anger sometimes will shock or intimidate or cause other people to rethink what they have been thinking in such as way that it can make change happen. So it is important for me to do that for my own mental and physical health, but it also important to do it as a role model for other people in the community, other people who are living with HIV. To help them to realize that they can take charge as much as they choose to in their own
health and in maintaining their health; and that we don't have to just turn ourselves over to the doctor and let them try to keep us medicated appropriately until they don't have any more options and we are gone.

FN: What are you angry about?

PS: I am angry...let me start, let me see. We'll start at a federal level, that there still hasn't been a response to make a major coordinated research effort to find a solution, to find a cure for AIDS. Still at a federal level, I am angry about the institutionalization of homophobia and racism that continues to exclude people from Haiti from the country and leaves people in quarantine in Cuba. You know, on U.S. military land. I get angry with things that happen at the state health department where committees are set up that don't have the representation of people living with HIV that I believe needs to be there in order for these committees to be effective. I get frustrated when I go to see my doctor and have to deal with a medical student who tells me that he thinks I should get my pneumonia vaccine booster this year instead of next year because, "You know, this time next year you may not be doing so well as you are doing right now," so that there is this assumption that everybody with HIV is going to be sick in the future. I get angry about that. There are lots of things that I get angry about!

FN: Talk to me a little bit about your community. How do you define your broader community, and how does that community support you in your efforts to channel your anger and define your faith, and those things?

PS: It reminds me of being back in school with Venn diagrams. I feel like my community is actually a composite of many Venn diagrams. There is for me the Radical Faerie community, this group of sort of alternatively minded, spiritual, gay, non-assimilationist gay men. There is the general performing arts community here, in town. More specifically, there is the performance art aspect of the performing arts community. There is the community of people who come and see my work and support that. There is a community of people who come to the Cabaret. There are certain aspects of the local queer community who, by nature of what I do as a performer and cultural activist, sort of see me in a position of leadership. And then there is
community of people who are working in issues around the epidemic in progressive and inclusive sorts of ways that I feel like I am a part of.

So there are lots of circles, many of which overlap, but of which I am probably the only person that is in the intersection of all of the circles in the Venn diagram. And I get support—I think my clearest support comes from my lover, Djola, and in his sort of Aquarian self, always pushing for broader knowledge and greater honesty. From friends of mine in the queer community, particularly a few people that I am close to who are also HIV positive, people whom I can call up and talk about—when something happens.

For example, the other day I shared with a fuck buddy whom I have know for six years, but we have never talked about HIV stuff. Now he is somebody who because of the relationship I am in now I am no longer sexual with, but I had been uncomfortable for a long time with the fact that I had never told him that I was HIV positive. And I didn't ever do anything that I considered unsafe with him, so I didn't feel like I needed to tell him because he needed to get tested or anything, but I felt just because I set a standard for myself of honesty, I felt that I had violated it in not sharing that with him. And I realized at the same time there was probably some denial operating on his part, that he was not with me, or probably with lots of other sex partners, not addressing the issue of HIV specifically.

Then after I told him that and he left, I felt like I needed to talk to somebody about having told him this and how shitty I was feeling about myself. And so I felt like I needed to tell somebody else who was HIV positive, because somebody who wasn't HIV positive might be able to listen and try to understand, but I didn't think that not having been through that they would really grasp the complexity of it on an emotional level. And so in that way those friends who are HIV positive who are really close to me are very important in finding support. Particularly because, as I said earlier, I feel like I have to find my own individual path through this. And so it's not even that those friends would necessarily all make the same choices that I make, but they understand the parameters within which I am making choices. Even though my choices might differ from theirs,

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4A friendship that includes sexual intimacy.
they understand why I make the choices that I do.

I have gotten an overwhelming amount of support from the philanthropic community in the Twin Cities, different foundations. In the last three years I have been very up front about being queer, about being HIV positive, and the role that plays in the work that I do. And I personally, and for the cabaret that I run here, have received over $100,000 in grant support in three years. I feel a sense of support from the community that I live in that is broader even than the people I know specifically. I feel like because of the courage I have been able to find and the honesty that I have manifested about being queer and living with HIV and what that means to me—because I have been public about that struggle and that search—I feel like I have been able to garner a level of respect from people in the community that manifests itself in a lot of support for what I do.

**FN:** You know one of the concerns I have—and we talked about this before the interview—is how are we going to sustain ourselves as a community, especially now that we really seem to be in a transition period between this crisis mode that you described as this kind of panic and the negative and recognizing that this is really our life. What advice do you have? How are you sustaining yourself? What kinds of things do you do, and how long do you think you'll be able to do it?

**PS:** You know, I think in a lot of ways it is comparable in terms of living in an oppressive society, maybe, with like, you know—in the face of all the sexism that there is in the world, how do you continue as a woman? Well, you just do. [Laughs]. It is not like you have a choice—like, "Well, tomorrow I am going to go have sex reassignment surgery and live the rest of my life as a man." You know, I mean that is maybe an option, but it is a pretty extreme option!

And so I think that's the only way that we are going to be able to do it. I'm sure it is very similar for people of color. It is not like you have a choice and you are just going to decide that tomorrow I am not going to be Native American anymore. And so it's just there, and I don't have a choice but to deal with it. And that may be different for people who are living with HIV in some ways than it is for people who are affected but not infected. Because in terms of like a career commitment or a choice to spend time on a care team, or whatever, I mean those are choices than can be
made--or one could choose not to make those decisions. And we all have to find our own rhythm in that. For me also in terms of career choices, or being on somebody's care team or whatever, I need to know for myself what my limits are.

So like on the Daisy Care\textsuperscript{5} with David I am there for four hours every two weeks. And being as sick as he is now, actually, it has been months since I have had any real significant verbal interaction with him while I have been there on Daisy Care. And so it takes me, it takes me, probably two weeks to be ready again to go and be there with him; to take care of him in that way because it is a lot for me to confront in terms of my own fears. And so I am able to sustain it mostly by paying attention to how much is it that I can do. And trying not to do superhuman efforts that feel like it is more than I can handle.

\textbf{FN:} But, Patrick, a lot of people with HIV don't choose to spend as much of their time as you do grappling with the issues. Why do you think you have that activist side to you?

\textbf{PS:} Well, now that I don't know. I am sure that if I weren't dealing with HIV, there is enough of a sort of warrior in me that I--it is not like this is the only battle in the world that needs to be fought, but it is obviously one that very personally affects me. But if it weren't this battle, I am sure that would leave me energy to put more time into dealing with other issues, whether it be in the queer community or whether it be confronting issues of white privilege, other things that I already spend some time on. But energies might be freed up to put more time on it, maybe money too, who knows. But I don't know, we live in a world where some people are activists and leaders, and other people are followers, and some people never join the parade at all.

When I talk about this, I feel really Catholic. I am aware of having been raised Catholic because I have this sense of--well, I have this calling, to do this, you know. I feel like this is part of what I am supposed to be doing in this life time on this planet. So even though I don't see it in a Christian context, it feels similar to me to having some kind

\textsuperscript{2} Daisy Care Team is the name of the group of individuals, many of whom are members of the Northwoods Radical Faeries, who provided home care support to David "Daisy" Lindahl, a Minneapolis poet. Lindahl died at home on the morning of August 26, 1994.
of call to the priesthood, or call to be a nun. I feel called to be an activist. I get a lot of support for it. I get a lot of attention, I get a lot of affection from people. I get flack for it too, sometimes, but mostly I get a lot of positive reinforcement.

**FN:** How do you define felicity, and where do you find it in your life?

**PS:** Felicity, joy. I find joy in running the Cabaret, especially because it is something that never existed before, and now because of—really single-handedly for seven years until I hired a couple of people to help me with it—it happened solely because of me. And there was this institution created that was my child. And so when people come here to see a show and it's a good show and there is this special feeling that is created here in my house, that is a great source of joy for me.

**PS:** What does joy feel like for you?

**FN:** It feels like being in a lake and floating, sort of in a treading water position, sort of vertical. Like the water kinds of holds you up so you don't sink down. Except there isn't any water, it is just sort of the love and affection from the people that just helps me feel like I float in the space.

And then I also have that sense in being together with Djola. Being in love is great. We are fortunate in that we get to travel some. We have been to Australia together and England and Scotland. After we get married we will go to Greece together for a couple weeks. So I feel really blessed not only in my relationship with him, but that we have the means to manifest some of our dreams.

**FN:** Why did you choose to get married?

**PS:** I chose to get married because he asked me and my heart said yes. And then in dealing with that on an intellectual level, which was a little bit more challenging, because even I might have asked myself, "Why do you want to participate in this failing heterosexual institution?" I stepped back and tried to look at it in a bigger context and realized that there is something about animals, and human beings in particular, that seems biologically driven to partnership.
And so I see marriage as a way of being able to clarify and solidify my sense of my relationship to Djola and then also a way to ask the community to participate in being supportive of that. So I look at marriage not in the sense of just two people being married in the 1990s in America, but on a broader human picture of human partnerships throughout all of time on the planet earth. And so for me it is a way of saying, "Yes, this is something I want to participate in."

FN: How do you think you'll feel during the ceremony?

PS: I'll probably be just fine and very ecstatic and then during the time of exchanging vows I'll probably have a hard time actually saying it out loud, because I will probably be so full of emotion I'll have a hard time talking. And then when Djola reads his vows to me I'll probably just cry. [Laughs].

FN: You'll be a typical bride.

PS: Yes, exactly. [Laughs].

FN: I want to turn now to your broader sense of what is going on in this country. What is your vision of America? When you think about America, what do you think about?

PS: Oh boy, that is a tough one. When I first hear the word "America," I think about messed-up things, like American foreign policy and federal government. And then if I try to bring it down to a more personal level, and just think about being a performing artist, then I think about the Ron Athey performance that happened here in this very space where we are sitting, that has generated so much reaction in Congress. And I think, "God, you know, even as America impacts my own personal life, it is a totally screwed-up and dysfunctional system!" [Laughs]. And so I feel like most of America is a hostile environment. But I feel like there are significant parts of America that are cells of healthy resistance to what most of America is. I believe that there are people like you

3. A performance piece by Ron Athey, held at Patrick's Cabaret on March 5, 1994, caused a fury among conservative critics of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Walker Art Center, which sponsored Athey's performance, spent about $150 in NEA funding for the show, a fraction of the total cost. The NEA received a two-percent cut in funds following intensive local and national press coverage of the Athey piece, which used ritualistic cutting of the body to depict the grief and pain of living with HIV.
and Gary Novotny, working in the state health department whom I believe are very progressive-minded and really trying to do the right thing. And I think that here and there, in lots of institutions, I see people in similar positions. People who would not wholeheartedly embrace the whole system and say, "God, isn't America great, let's wave the flag, and say I am so proud to be an American and work in this government job."

But you know, people who come much more out of the spheres of resistance and wanting to change and improve things.

And living in Minneapolis, I feel like I actually get to live most of my life and have most of my interaction with other people be with people who are like-minded and progressive. But I realize you don't have to go very far to run into people who are going to put up a lot of resistance. As somebody said to me yesterday, "You know, Patrick, you're in Minnesota, but there are like people in Appalachia who are one hundred percent behind Jesse Helms, and given the choice, they would just as soon shoot you."

**FN:** How did it make you feel when you read the things about the performance? That must have been sort of strange, to see your Cabaret in *Time* and *Newsweek*.

**PS:** Well, they haven't written about it yet in *Time*. In *Newsweek* they mentioned the performance, but they didn't mention Patrick's Cabaret, so I was kind of disappointed. I said this to John Killacky from the Walker, tongue in cheek, but also seriously, "I don't care what they say. I just want to make sure they always say Patrick's Cabaret." When Rush Limbaugh said, "Patrick's Cabaret makes Robert Mapplethorpe look like Norman Rockwell," I thought, "God, that's great!" [Laughs] And then when I was in England recently and met this woman who was the director of performing arts at this performing arts center, and I was

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5. John Killacky is director of performing arts at the Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis.

6. Rush Limbaugh is a very conservative and controversial radio talk show host.

7. Robert Mapplethorpe was a photographer whose works depicting homoerotic images were also considered controversial, and they became the center of an earlier National Endowment for the Arts funding battle. Mapplethorpe died of AIDS.
introduced to her and she asked me what I do, and I said, "I run Patrick's Cabaret, maybe you've heard of it," and she said, "Oh the Patrick's Cabaret!"

And so it is kind of amusing to me, because I feel like this very low-budget, grass-roots institution that I created, that it could have such an impact on a national--and even international--scale, it is pathetic because it speaks to the irrationality of the fear of the people who cause it to be so much more significant than the fact that it was this low-profile venue and a show that one hundred people saw. And so it is pathetic that it could garner that kind of reaction when there are so many other things.

I mean if the report of one woman who is a victim of domestic violence, which would be much more terrifying than anything that happened in this space, garnered the same kind of response, whether it be in the media or in Congress, or whatever, we would go a long way to creating a world that would be much more livable. So in a way it is pathetic, in a way it is kind of amusing. In a way it just points out to me that this is the America that I live in, where there are just some people who have very sane and thoughtful responses to what's happened, and other people whose responses are hysterical.

**FN:** How do you think America is impacted, then, by, as you said, "This body in this time on this earth"?

**PS:** My hope is to be an influence, a source of energy that makes people more curious, more perceptive and less judgmental, and more willing to experience things that may not be a part of their reality but are definitely other people's realities. That is a big part of both the work I do as a performing artist, where I try to share what my reality is, and then some way that being a snapshot of queer reality in America or HIV epidemic reality, or whatever, with people who either don't have that sense, or maybe have that but haven't been able to articulate it, to help them have a clearer understanding of it. So I hope to be a force for some clarity and honesty and acceptance.

**FN:** What do you fear most?

**PS:** What do I fear most? Getting sick. I don't want to get sick, and I fear being in a situation like David is in right
now. I fear whether I would be in the situation whether I would choose to be alive. And I fear what that would be like for people that I care about.

**FN:** How would you describe David's situation?

**PS:** David has moments of lucidity, but they are more the exception than the rule. And he physically he is getting the nutrition that he needs because of the TPN\textsuperscript{1} that he takes, so it is not like he is starving, but he doesn't have the strength really to be up and about very much. He is bedridden ninety-nine percent of the time. He is not very often able to engage in conversation with people.

**FN:** So that is something that you are fearful of, not being able to have that connection?

**PS:** Yes. Being a dancer, it is terrifying for me to think about not having the energy to get up and move. Being a performer, to not have the energy and the means to verbally communicate with people would be terrifying to me. And then, just what it would take to have to be taken care of, to have to have people change my diapers, regularly come and bring my medications and all of that. I trust that if I need that there will probably be lots of people who will be willing to do that, but I just fear being in a situation where I would need that.

What do you fear on a broader sense, when you talk about America?

**PS:** You know, I am more hopeful there than I am fearful. If I had to paint a worse-case scenario it would be that—not that George Bush would get reelected, but that somebody like Jesse Helms would actually get elected. But even then, when I imagine that kind of scenario, I guess I feel that I am enough of a warrior, enough of a fighter, that it would just be, well then, I would just go underground and fight in ways where I would have to be smarter about my strategies and maybe more violent in my tactics.

**FN:** I can't imagine you as a violent person.

8. TPN is a system that delivers complete nutrition intravenously. Lindahl received 12 hours of TPN a day though a direct line into his body.
PS: The violence I would definitely would not have it directed toward people. But if at some time blowing up some building seemed like it was going to further a cause by destroying FBI records or whatever that might be, I can understand why people have done things like that in the past. And I can imagine an America that would be enough of a fascist state where I would be compelled to do something like that in the future.

FN: Let's turn to hope, because that is a better topic. [Laughs] How do you define hope? What do you think of that word, and what do you hope for?

PS: When I think of hope it is about knowing that it would be possible that tomorrow there might be less oppression than today. And so hope is knowing that would be possible and believing that it might happen.

FN: Is that what you are hoping for?

PS: Yes, yes. I mean, there is also hope that there might be a cure for the epidemic. Or that there might be, if not a cure, at least ways for living with HIV for just be a long-term chronic condition that is not life-threatening. I guess that would also be a removal of oppression.

My hope would be for a world where people felt like they had options as to what it was that they were going to do, and knew what it was that they wanted to do, and had the resources to do it. I said earlier in my interview that I feel really blessed that I know what I want to do and I get to do it. For me, that would be the best of all possible worlds for everybody. That people knew what they wanted, and wanted things that were truly good for them, and good for other people, and were able to pursue that.

FN: How do you think this time will be remembered?

PS: [Pause]. I think it will be remembered as a time of struggle and confusion. I think it will be seen as a time when—I think there are probably some things that we all assume right now and then actions that we make based on those assumptions that at some point in the future we might realize, "Wow, if we had seen the bigger part of the picture instead of that one corner, we'd have acted so much
differently." And I don't know right now what corner of the picture it is that we are only seeing, but I have a sense that we are only seeing certain parts of the picture, and we will remember this by looking back and saying, "Well, a lot of people were doing the best they could with their limited knowledge."

**FN:** How do you want to be remembered?

**PS:** I want to be remembered as somebody who made a difference and somebody who...felt passionately.

**FN:** That's all my questions. Do you have anything else you want to say?

**PS:** No.

**FN:** Thanks so much!