

A C T U P O R A L H I S T O R Y P R O J E C T

A PROGRAM OF
**MIX – THE NEW YORK LESBIAN &
GAY EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Interviewee: **Patrick Moore**

Interview Number: **006**

Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

Date of Interview: **January 14, 2003**

**ACT UP Oral History Project
Interview of Patrick Moore
January 14, 2003**

SARAH SCHULMAN: So, let's start by you saying your name, today's date, how old you are and the address of where we are.

PATRICK MOORE: Patrick Moore, January 14th, 2003. I'm 40 years old, and what else?

SS: Where are we?

PM: The address is 506 West Knoll Drive in West Hollywood, California.

SS: Okay, so my first question is, do you remember the first time you heard the word AIDS.

PM: No. I can imagine when I would have been. I probably would have been a freshman in college at Carnegie Mellon. I don't think I ever heard the word AIDS, when I was in high school.

SS: So when – do you remember the first time that you started to feel that this might be something that could effect you in your life?

PM: You know, I had always been, for some reason, very paranoid about STD's, and I remember the first time I had sex with a man, I was immediately afraid that I had gotten syphilis or gonorrhea or something – long before I knew about HIV or AIDS. So, when AIDS came along, it felt kind of the same as that. It added anxiety that I already had about sex. But, I can't say that until I moved to New York in 1984 or '85 it was something that I thought was going to effect me personally.

SS: So When did it begin to enter into your life?

PM: When I moved to New York. Because, literally, I saw it. I saw people who were sick, and I was with someone then. I was with my lover Dino. We'd been together in Pittsburgh, and had moved together to New York. And I remember us going

to dinner with friends and saying, we are so lucky because we don't actually have any friends who've gotten sick, and it doesn't seem like it is going to affect us in any immediate way.

So, for at least, you know, four or five years while I was living in New York, I was aware of it. But it seemed very distant to me.

SS: And did it affect the way you treated other people, or the way that you had sex with people, or when you found out someone had AIDS?

PM: Well, it was very complicated for me because I was in a relationship that was supposedly monogamous. Except that both of us were having all this sex. So it did affect the way that I had sex if I was having anonymous sex. I never had anal sex, and I usually, at the beginning, tried to use a condom when I had oral sex. What I didn't realize was that my lover has HIV positive, and I was having unsafe sex with him. So it was a very convoluted way of not really thinking about what AIDS meant.

SS: Do you think – why, why did it take so long for you guys to realize that Dino might be HIV positive?

PM: Fear. Fear and shame. Shame that we had a kind of sexual relationship that wasn't the kind of relationship we thought we should have. We thought we should have a monogamous relationship, and we didn't have that, and it wasn't going to happen.

And fear because the likelihood was that we were both HIV positive, so, you know, it was the elephant in the living room syndrome, where it became more and more terrifying as we didn't talk about it. And also as he began to exhibit symptoms, then it became just crazy. It was crazy. He lost thirty pounds in a year. And both of us knew what was happening, but we just couldn't bring ourselves to talk about it.

SS: So how did it come out?

PM: We were in Fire Island at a – I don't even remember whose house it was. It might have been Robert Farber's house. In fact, yeah, it was. He had invited us to come out for a weekend, and it was a very, kind of, drunken weekend. And I remember getting drunk, and we were going to have sex, and he said to me, I have this spot on my ass, and I don't want to have sex with you until I know what it is. And it looked like a mole, but at the same time, immediately I knew what it was. I knew that it was KS. And so after that happened, it kind of pushed it over the top where we, we felt like we had to confront it. And it was a very confusing process, because he was quite sick, and I didn't appear to be sick at all.

Tape I
00:05:00

But we both went in to be tested at – what was the famous AIDS doctor's name? Linda Laubenstein?

She was actually the model for *The Normal Heart*, the character in *The Normal Heart*. And so she – we went to this very famous AIDS doctor and she tested us both. But my test results were lost. Dino's came back positive right away, which was not a surprise. But mine were lost for – it was a significant amount of time, like two or three weeks, where I assumed that I was positive and I actually told my job that I thought I was positive and that I didn't know what was going to happen.

SS: And how did they respond?

PM: Well, I had – the week before started at the Alliance for the Arts as the director of the Estate Project for Artists with AIDS, and they were incredible. I mean, -

SS: So you were working at an AIDS organization?

PM: I was already there, yeah.

SS: So you had a lot of people in your life who had AIDS?

PM: Well, beyond that, I had already been at an AIDS organization. I had worked for AmFAR doing Art Against Aids, and before that I had been involved with ACT UP, so this was far in to my involvement with AIDS, both personally and professionally, that finally I had to confront it in my own life.

SS: So when you went to ACT UP, you had no idea that Dino had AIDS?

PM: No.

SS: So what brought you to ACT UP?

PM: Well, I don't want to make it as simple as this, but Maria Maggenti basically took me to ACT UP for the first time. And I went to it with a very, kind of obscure feeling about AIDS and any necessity of doing anything about it. But what I did feel was that she was an interesting person and I was sort of enthralled with her and her world. And once I went, then there was an immediate connection with the energy of it and the people. And also, many of the artists – I was working at The Kitchen at the time, and many of the artists that I knew kind of were around ACT UP, and people that I liked and admired were around ACT UP.

SS: So what did you see when you walked in that first time?

PM: I didn't go – my – the first time I had involvement with ACT UP, I went to the first City Hall action. So I went to an action before I went to an ACT UP meeting, which I think is probably the greatest way to be introduced to that because it was so incredible. It was so beautiful, and I was just completely enthralled with these people who seemed to be so committed and were so cool, and were so – they were just everything I wanted to be.

SS: In what way?

PM: Well, I have actually been thinking about that and I am not sure in what way. For one thing, they were very, very smart and they were very, very articulate. And they were very aggressive, and I found all of that appealing. And also, there were many handsome men there, and – and I think because at that time I really was enamored of Maria. I remember I have a picture of her being hauled away in the bus with like, this long blond hair trailing out of it, and it was a very romantic thing that there was this lesbian that was in the middle of all this. And that I wanted to be like her. I think I wanted to be like her more than anything.

SS: So, the thing that brought you to ACT UP was more the people rather than AIDS itself?

PM: Yeah.

SS: Okay. Had you ever been in a demonstration before?

PM: Never. And had never even really considered it. Or thought that it would be a possibility, or – or even understood really what it was. I certainly didn't understand civil disobedience. No, nothing.

SS: So you had never participated in any kind of political event, on anything, including anything gay?

PM: No. No, not at all. I had been completely apolitical up until that point.

SS: Okay. So you came to City Hall, and what happened?

PM: I think that I brought a camera. Though, I must have brought a camera, if I took pictures of Maria. So I remember being distanced from it. I didn't really participate. I remember I kind of like stood around and took photographs, and didn't

really meet anyone, didn't talk to anyone. Just observed. But it was still obviously a very powerful experience for me, even though I felt distanced from it.

SS: And then did you go to a meeting after that?

PM: Yeah, I went to a meeting, probably the next week. And at the time, I was the PR director of The Kitchen, and I had just persuaded them to let me hire artists to design our public relations materials. So I had the idea right away that I would hire Gran Fury to do our poster, that would be wheatpasted all over the city, and then it was mailed out to like, 10,000 people.

So I talked to Don Moffett from Gran Fury and met with them, and they did this incredible poster that was just a black sheet, and then in white type it said, "With 42,000 dead, art is no longer enough. Take direct collective action to end the AIDS crisis." And it just sort of changed my life, because for the first time, all of these things had been drawn together in my life. Art was drawn together with gay men who I kind of got and respected and responded to, and also this incredible sophistication. Because that was the thing about ACT UP, there were these incredible graphic designers and – you know, people who were very professional in their lives, and who brought with them that whole world that they had learned outside of ACT UP. So I think that was kind of what cemented my relationship, and I remember feeling very, very proud of that.

SS: Now, did you know the Gran Fury people before this? Was there a work of theirs that was around at that moment, that made you notice them?

PM: Well, at the time, I associated the Silence equals Death posters with Gran Fury. And I know now that it was a few members of Gran Fury but it wasn't necessarily all of them that created that. But I remember very clearly before I met Maria, I think,

before anything, seeing those posters on the street and knowing that there was something very important happening, because of the – just the brilliance of that poster. The visual sophistication of it and the obscurity of it, and the fact that it kind of forced you to think about how to respond. You had to look at very small type to like, figure out that there was an association – an organization associated with it. So I guess that's - I probably asked Maria who did it, and I think she told me Don Moffett's name.

SS: So how did The Kitchen respond to having this be their poster?

PM: Well, at the beginning, they seemed to be cool with it. And then I later found that they were not cool with it at all, and extremely upset and extremely angry. Because a number of the artists – the back of the poster advertised which artists were performing there at the time, and a number of these artists felt like they had kind of been co-opted into this message. Not that they necessarily disagreed with it, but they felt that it had been grafted onto them.

The board of directors was very unhappy because basically it's saying that, you know, to be an artist is not enough. To – it's not an active way to participate in the AIDS crisis, to simply make work about it.

So, actually, it caused me to resign, and Maria and I went to the *Village Voice*, and there was actually a long article about it in the *Village Voice* that I think Amy Taubin might have written. Or Cindy Carr, one of the two. And I just left one day. Because basically they told me that after that I had to get everything approved. And I felt that it was very much a double standard, because the curators didn't have that kind of control over what they presented. They weren't asked to have their ideas approved at The

Kitchen, artistically. But obviously this, because it had been about AIDS, and because it had been something that had upset the artists, they were kind of pulling back the control.

SS: Well The Kitchen was the product of a certain kind of Sixties art movement, right? That was –

PM: Yeah, and work that was quite self-focused and obscure. It was not a part of the Sixties that was socially engaged. It was more the part that was about those early pioneers of video art. They made great work, but it was certainly not about social issues.

Tape I
00:15:00

At least not –

SS: So who were the people on the board? Was it Robert Ashley, or ?

PM: Ashley was on it. Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass. Now I don't know which of these people were upset, because I was only told in a general way the board was upset.

SS: You were told that by Bonnie or by – who was the head of ...?

PM: Bobbi Tsumagari.

SS: Bobbi, right.

PM: So that's who the big blowout was with, and I kind of regretted it because I really liked her and kind of became friendly with her again afterwards, but – you know, in reality it just – it wasn't a tenable position actually, to be there anymore. That's kind of what ACT UP did for me, is it raised the importance of AIDS so high, and made it seem so – its effect so broad-reaching in my life, that I kind of couldn't feel like John Jesurun's performances were that important to promote anymore. So, there was just a tremendous amount of anger about that that I had never really felt before. Anger that I – you know, everything that seemed important before didn't seem important anymore.

SS: And yet, AIDS was not really part of your personal life. It was –

PM: No, still, I think even at that point, I still didn't have one friend who had AIDS.

SS: And yet you were so committed to it that you were willing to transform your entire world?

PM: I think the reason was is that I had never felt any connection to gay people before, and when I went to ACT UP, for whatever reason, I felt connected for the first time. And that was an incredibly powerful thing for me. Because I had never – I'd never wanted to be around gay people. And finally I saw this kind of aspirational model from both gay men and – I had had lesbians in my life, but there had never been a real relationship with a lesbian. My life had been mostly been about friendships with straight women and my lover and, kind of, a small group of friends.

SS: So, then you became deeply involved in ACT UP?

PM: More and more, but I'm not sure if my experience is unique, but I did not quickly create friendships in ACT UP. I became involved, in that I went to demos. And, I think I always went to the Monday night meetings. But, for me, ACT UP was actually a very cold place. I found people very unfriendly and it was extremely intimidating to me, because there had been people who had been politically involved for a long time, and people like Maxine [Wolfe], who seemed to have this wealth of political experience, and I just found it very intimidating to talk to them. And then, there were very, very attractive guys who I found intimidating. So, it was not, probably, until the first time I was arrested, that I began to feel friendships with people.

SS: Now, were you in social situations with these men, also?

PM: Never.

SS: Never – so, just at the meetings?

PM: Yeah, never. And, part of the problem for me – or the complication – was that I was in a relationship. And, while I certainly would have liked to have sex with a number of people there, I couldn't ask anybody out on a date, really. And, I suspect that for many people, that was how they socialized – they dated and it kind of became their whole world.

SS: Now, did Dino ever come with you to ACT UP?

PM: Never. He went to one demonstration with me, and he told me very clearly, it's not who I am. I'm not interested.

SS: So, when did you get arrested?

PM: I got arrested the first time at the first FDA action. And, it was also – I don't remember how it was done, I think we were just kind of put into affinity groups, for the most part. But, those were my first friends in ACT UP – those guys that I got arrested with.

SS: What was the name of your affinity group?

PM: I don't know if we had a name, I think we were just Wave whatever, but we were the ones with the lab coats that had the bloody hands on them.

SS: Wave Three?

PM: Something like that.

SS: So, who was in it?

PM: Loads of people I don't even really remember anymore. I remember one couple that I came friends with named Jeff and Lee, and I haven't seen either of them in

years. Those friends actually didn't sort of stay with me. When I developed more long lasting relationships in ACT UP was when I started doing committee work, and especially the fundraising committee, because that was a whole other set of meetings each week and that's really when I kind of became obsessed with ACT UP.

SS: Let's just go back to your first arrest – how did you decide that you wanted to be arrested?

PM: I don't know. I think I felt like such an outsider, and I thought, the only way to meaningfully participate in this is not to kind of stand here at the back of this room and participate in these boring meetings. Because what was inspirational to me was people getting arrested.

So, you know, there was quite a good process, I think, with making people feel comfortable with getting arrested. And, I didn't feel particularly afraid anymore. I had listened to that process so many times.

SS: Now, how did your affinity group – did you guys meet together in New York in decide on a lab coat?

PM: Hmmm hmmm. We had several long, long. Long meetings, where we really talked about it for a long time. And, I don't remember how we came about – I think we started talking about images, and we were talking about doctors and blood and, kind of, responsibility. And, I remember, we almost ruined the second floor of The Kitchen, because I asked The Kitchen if we could meet there and make those lab coats there, and we spray painted them, and the red spray paint went everywhere. So, they were actually very accommodating.

SS: And how was the affinity group action organized, once you got to the FDA? When did you know when it was your turn?

PM: It kind of wasn't very well organized in terms of that, because it was pretty much, I think, up to the affinity group when they wanted to go forward and be arrested.

So, I remember that we kept feeling like – okay, should we do it now, should we wait? And then people were getting arrested. We just sort of walked up, and it happened very quickly. So, it didn't feel very programmed, it just sort of felt very casual.

SS: And then, you guys were all hanging out because you were detained. So, did you talk to people? Was it more relaxed?

PM: That one was particularly relaxed, because, as I remember, they actually set up a big tent to process everybody. I don't think we went to jail, because it was out there in the middle of nowhere.

SS: So, after that, you got into fund raising?

PM: Hmmm hmmm.

SS: Why did you choose fundraising, of all the ...?

PM: Because I knew how to do it, and because I had been running Art Against AIDS for AmFAR with Annie Philbin. I really knew that whole world, and I thought, why am I raising all of this money – through selling these incredibly important art works for AmFAR, when I don't believe in AmFAR.

SS: Why didn't you believe in AmFAR?

PM: Because I knew how much it was costing to run AmFAR, and I knew how much it cost for us to run Art Against AIDS, specifically – and it wasn't, it wasn't viable

for me to really sign on to that. And then, when Mathilde Krim did a benefit dinner in Chicago with Elizabeth Taylor – it was shortly after the governor – I think it was the governor of Illinois came out for mandatory testing. So, ACT UP Chicago decided that they would infiltrate the dinner, and I was in this weird situation of being in ACT UP, but also working for AmFAR. So, they flew me to Chicago to meet with ACT UP, and, you know, there was no resolution to it, basically. ACT UP Chicago wanted the governor to withdraw his statement and he wouldn't. So, as I recall, there was, like, a protest out front. And, that's when I kind of couldn't work there anymore.

SS: But, you were inside, for the dinner?

PM: No, they didn't let me go to the dinner.

SS: Were you outside? Or, did you stay –

PM: No, I went there, like, two weeks before the dinner, and they didn't let me go back for the dinner.

SS: Okay. So, when you came to fundraising, who were the other people on the committee?

PM: Jeffrey Aronoff was the head of it. And we would always meet. He has this scarf company and, like, he does chenille scarves and throws, so we would meet in his office on 23rd Street, surrounded by all these incredible queeny-like throws and shawls and scarves. And, Ken Silver – who's a professor at N.Y.U. – an art history professor; and my friend Charles Hovland, who's, kind of continued to be my best friend from ACT UP. And then, because we were doing the auction, all of a sudden there were these amazing people that came out of the art world, like Bob Gober, who I became very friendly with, then.

SS: Was the auction ongoing, when you joined fundraising? Or, was it decided after you joined?

PM: No, I think what happened is that somebody approached me because they knew what I did for work, and I talked to Annie, and Annie and I went to fundraising and said that we would volunteer and organize it.

SS: So, you proposed the auction?

PM: I think there was an idea to do one, and we said that we would run it.

SS: Okay, I really want to know about this as much as possible – how you organized the auction and who came in and what the structure was?

PM: Well, the whole reason the auction worked was that Robert Gober – who was probably the hottest artist in the world at that moment – and he, basically made everyone in the art world participate. Every gallery participated, every artist gave something significant. And, Mira Rubell was a great collector of his, or aspired to be a great collector of his. And they, at the moment, controlled what is now – is it still the Guggenheim/Soho? I guess the Guggenheim/Soho is closed – but, that floor above the Prada store on Broadway was sitting there empty. And he convinced her to give that floor free to hold the auction. And his dealer, Paula Cooper, gave everything, in terms of showing the work. So, it was just a really – it was like a great version of what I already did for AmFAR, except that nobody was getting paid. And I had just quit The Kitchen – no, I just quit AmFAR – and was on unemployment. So, I had nothing to do. So, I just it all day long, every day and I loved it. It was so much fun.

SS: How long did it take to prepare?

PM: It was at least six months, and I think, probably for two or three of those months, I did nothing but that.

SS: Now, can you tell us some of the people who donated and the pieces that they donated?

PM: Probably the most important piece was Robert Gober's sculpture, which was a sculpture of a man's leg coming out of a wall made out of wax, and it sold for – I think, \$100,000.

SS: Do you remember who bought it?

PM: Hmmm hmmm. There was a man who was a very important collector and dealer in Switzerland named Thomas Mann, who had a representative come. And, we had already discussed how much he was willing to pay. So, I sat in the audience, actually, and bid for the house to bid it up to the reserve. And then, he paid a bit more than the reserve.

SS: And, who made the contacts with this level of collector, so that they were aware?

PM: Things like that would probably have been done through Bob's gallery, which was Paula Cooper. But, you know, there were other significant art works. There was a big Eric Fischl that was sold. There was, as I recall, an important Warhol, an important Liechtenstein.

SS: Do you remember which pieces?

PM: No, I don't. And, we didn't do a catalog for it, because it was too expensive. But, basically, every major artist working or represented in New York at that

time, participated, and not with some stupid print, you know, but with a really good – the only person's estate that I don't think we got something from was Keith Haring.

SS: And do you know why?

PM: Yeah, because his estate is basically run by people who are, didn't – they're not connected with AIDS, and they don't understand the reality of AIDS and what it meant in Keith's life. They were his friends and family, but, as you know, that can be a very separate group than the people you actually do things with and fall in love with. And, somebody else, ended up giving a Haring, so that he would be represented, but the estate didn't give anything.

SS: Do you remember who gave the piece?

PM: I think it might have been Ken Silver, or somebody that he found.

SS: No, how many artists, do you remember participated?

PM: I don't – but I would guess, at least, a hundred.

SS: Can you remember some of who they were?

PM: Meg Webster – I'm just trying to remember specific people – probably Jeff Koons, Lorna Simpson, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer. I'm sure David Salle was there, probably Cindy Sherman. Basically, every hot artist.

SS: Were there people who wanted to participate because it would elevate them on some level? Because there were a lot of artists in ACT UP, who were trying to build careers.

PM: Well, actually, that's true – there were a number of ACT UP artists in it as well. And people who weren't so well known – the way we dealt with that, is that I think we allowed everybody to participate – that some people were in the silent auction, and

then there was a live auction. I remember my friend, Robert Farber gave a painting and was very pissed off, because it wasn't – he thought – placed in the right place, and – so, there were things like that. And, you know, Donald Moffett was a part of it and Zoe Leonard. But, I don't think it was as crass as that. It was just, sort of, I think, for all of the artists saying, we're a part of this too, so we want to be represented.

SS: So, you had the auction, and how many people attended.

PM: I have no idea how many people attended, but I know that that huge floor of that huge building was completely full, so there must have been well over a thousand people.

SS: And how much money did you raise?

PM: About a million dollars.¹

SS: So, you raised a million dollars for ACT UP. Now, what was ACT UP's budget like, before this.

PM: First of all, I don't think we ever had a budget, because there was no money to budget. There was certainly not the whole process of approving a budget and making a budget, because there was no one to do that. There was no centralized authority to ACT UP that would do that. But, that was actually very problematic, because anything we did have would just be spent, you know, based on somebody making an emotional presentation to the floor. So, probably, ACT UP was spending well under \$100,000 a year, at that point.

¹ After further discussion, Patrick Moore and Ann Philbin both now believe that the one million dollar figure was an exaggeration. In his book, *Beyond Shame: Reclaiming the Abandoned History of Radical Gay Sexuality*, Patrick Moore cites the figure \$600,000.

SS: And, how were they raising \$100,000 a year?

PM: I have no idea. I can only guess that people gave money. And it was a great thing, because there was never any recognition of people who gave money, and I don't even know who you would have given money to. I guess there was a bank account.

SS: You don't know who controlled it or who the signatories were?

PM: I have no idea.

SS: And, if people wanted to get reimbursed – fundraising committee had nothing to do with that?

PM: No.

SS: You weren't reimbursed for anything?

PM: I don't even know how we paid for things like – I don't know if we paid for anything with the auction? I think it was all donated. So, I don't even know how you would get a check to pay for something?

SS: Okay, so you have this organization where there's a very casual and informal financing system of money coming in and going out, without any control – around \$100,000 a year – and suddenly there's a million dollars. So, what happened?

PM: Everything fell apart. It was the worst, possible thing that could have happened to ACT UP, in my opinion, because, first of all, I had never felt a kind of ownership – I'd never felt proprietary about ACT UP. It was this amorphous thing that was so great, because you couldn't quite get your hands on it. So, there was none of that kind of bullshit around it. But, suddenly, after I'd spent six months raising a million dollars, I felt very differently about it. And I remember, we would do things – like,

somebody would say, let's buy a full page in the *New York Times*, which, at that time, I think, was \$15,000. And my feeling was, one day we go march around the *New York Times*' offices, and complain about their AIDS coverage, and the next day we spend \$15,000, supporting their advertising revenue. And those things didn't reconcile to me. But, they were done in such a way that during those meetings, that had become increasingly hideous and long, that people just got frustrated. And, you know, I think spending of money became one way to have power.

Tape I
00:35:00

SS: So, what other things did they spend money on, after the auction?

PM: There was a lot of money spent on needle exchange, which I think was a very valid thing. But, needle exchange and, also, Housing Works, both had this kind of strange relationship to ACT UP – it was almost as if they were their own organizations, but they were born out of ACT UP. So, I remember a fair amount of money going to needle exchange.

SS: For what? Why was it expensive?

PM: I suppose at that point, they bought all of the needles. They bought all of the supplies. There was money – a lot of money, spent on sending people to conferences – which, I suppose, was a valid expense, as well. There weren't any salaries – I mean, that was one great thing about ACT UP. We paid rent on that hall at Cooper Union, at that point. But, then the thing that happened was that that guy stole the money.

SS: Tell us about that. Who was this guy, and how did it happen?

PM: I'm not being coy, I really don't remember his name. But, he stole – and I don't even know who found out he stole – he was a member of needle exchange, and he stole something like \$20,000. And the thing that was very complicated about it was, was

that he was African American, and at that point, many of us who were on fundraising were white. And also – I mean, the membership of ACT UP was predominantly white, I would have to say, too. And many of us, who were just coming into political consciousness, had a very difficult time calling the police on a black man.

SS: Did he have a drug problem?

PM: Yeah, he had a drug problem. And, it just turned into a huge, huge, huge very divisive argument.

SS: About whether or not to call the police?

PM: Yeah, and then he made a promise to gradually pay the money back – which he never did. And, there were horrible arguments – like, not only on the floor of ACT UP, but also people coming to fundraising and us, basically saying, you know, we're not going to raise money for ACT UP, because of this. So, that's when my relationship with ACT UP kind of got strained, and it really was – money was very poisonous for ACT UP, I think.

SS: Well, now how did it effect your personal relationship with ACT UP, when you started to be the guy who had pulled off this incredibly successful event?

PM: Well, it was never really like I got recognition or thanks for doing that – nor was – I mean, I was one of 30 people that was working really hard for a long time. So, I don't think – I had my role in that, but I don't think I ever really felt that I had any pull because of that, or that I was particularly identified. I mean, people in ACT UP were very arrogant that way. There was a sense that if you were gaining power, or if you were doing something that was getting too much attention – it's the Peter Staley syndrome. I mean, that's why people started to hate Peter, because he became sort of a poster boy for

ACT UP. So, there was actually kind of a reverse action, where people would be dismissive of you.

SS: Why was that?

Tape II
00:00:00

SS: Having worked with 30 people really intensively for six months, you must have formed closer relationships.

PM: Yeah, I did, and at that point, there were a number of people – Tony Fehr, who has since gone on to become a really recognized artist in the New York art world, Bob Gober, Annie, Ken Silver, Jeffrey Aronoff – all those people were, actually really good friends of mine.

SS: Had Dino gotten his diagnosis yet, at this point?

PM: Yeah, I think it was around that time, actually. And, I suppose that's another reason I pulled back, because I was taking care of him, and life just became, you know, so intense, that I couldn't quite take the intensity of ACT UP at the same time.

SS: But, when you realized that Dino had AIDS – did you go to people in ACT UP with AIDS to get treatment information or –

PM: To a certain extent. I remember talking to – I don't know if it was Peter – it might have been Peter Staley – about trials to get Dino on. I remember trying to get him on something that was a type of chemotherapy that was not supposed to make you so sick, and having a very frustrating experience trying to do that. But, the thing was, Dino was extremely passive, in terms of his way of dealing with his illness. So, after awhile, I kind of gave up a little bit.

SS: And, were people from ACT UP involved with Dino's care at all?

PM: Yeah, but they were mostly people who had kind of been my friends already. Bob Gober was the exception. Bob would actually come and sit in our apartment with Dino, when I went to work – quite a few times. And he was kind of my hero during that. And, then, Annie and her lover Brian Weil, who also was in ACT UP, on needle exchange, came and stayed with me the day Dino died. And Charles. So, yeah, I guess, for the most part, those were ACT UP people, but they're also my friends outside of ACT UP.

SS: I remember seeing you at a demonstration when Dino was very sick. It might have been Stop the Church – did you go to that?

PM: Hmmm hmmm. I was inside.

SS: Right. So, you were still really participating. You were going to demonstrations – you had just backed away from committee work?

PM: Yeah, and think, also, at that point, fundraising had become troubled because of the stealing of the money. So, probably, at that point, I was just going to actions.

SS: So, how were the actions feeling to you, now that you were so personally implicated?

PM: I think that the problem with the actions is that they had diminishing returns, because much of the – much of the excitement of early ACT UP actions was seeing ourselves represented in the mass media – at least for me. And, as there was a kind of burn-out in the mass media about ACT UP and about our actions, it started to feel a little bit more desperate and a little more out of control, which I liked. I liked that feeling. But, I also wasn't sure that we were – kind of – that we had as many tangible

goals, and that we were able to achieve specific things, as we were in drug approval process and that kind of stuff.

SS: What about treatment oriented actions? Things that were geared towards getting drugs, prices lowered, or getting drugs released – did you feel any more invested in those?

PM: Those were very, kind of, insider actions, for the most part. I mean, a lot of those actions involved going to drug companies and doing stuff in offices. And, I felt probably too unsafe to go to an action where there would be three or four people arrested. I liked larger actions with, kind of broader goals. I liked the church. One of my favorite actions was we went to the Republican National Women's Club – I think it's called – on the upper East Side, when Bush was speaking. And we all dressed in our little Republican outfits, and then, when Bush began to speak – and it was a small room, it was as big as this house – we pulled out our signs and everything. And, I thought those actions were very clever and very exciting and I loved those.

Tape II
00:05:00

SS: Now – Stop the Church – were you raised Catholic?

PM: No.

SS: No. So what were your feelings about being inside the church?

PM: At the time, I was so angry, that I was fine with it, you know. I really didn't care if it offended people. I felt that the church was and is so hypocritical, that for people to be so protective of the ritual of the church, was also hypocritical, and it didn't matter if they were hurt. Since then, I've come to think that – I can't say I cared if people were offended, but I think maybe it was a very divisive action, and it hurt more than it accomplished.

SS: In what way?

PM: I think that it – you know, it's this whole idea of violence, actually, in political action. And, it's a double-edged sword, because I think that one of the reasons the civil rights movement was so effective in this country is that violence did become associated, even if it was a fringe movement, because I think, finally, America had to take, they had to take it seriously because it was getting violent, and I think that's the only time we take things seriously in America. So, I think we alienated a lot of people with Stop the Church, but I think they were mostly people who were kind of already vaguely supportive of what we were doing. They were like rich queens who kind of didn't want to be associated with anything naughty – who were still part of the establishment. So, who cares, really, if you alienate those people, because they weren't doing anything anyway. But, what I think it did for ACT UP is that it made people feel that we were violent, even though we didn't do anything violent. It was so emotionally violent, that I think that it really raised our effectiveness in terms of, maybe the government taking on larger issues, or just having to deal with this somehow.

SS: Now, throughout this, you were a writer. What year did your first book come out?

PM: 1991 – my first book came out.

SS: And, how much did your experience in ACT UP influence your novels?

PM: My first novel – it didn't really influence it at all – and, it actually hurt, because I tacked on an ending – where it was this guy who was very sexually compulsive and fascinated with the kind of sexual world of gay New York and anonymous sex and

self hatred of that, and getting off on it all. And then, at the end, he kind of goes to ACT UP in the last chapter and finds redemption – which was a stupid ending for it, and totally false. But, what attention the book got was because it was sort of marketed in the vein of ACT UP. I got a big piece in Interview magazine, and I think my agent at the time called it the first ACT UP novel.

SS: It was called *This Every Night*.

PM: Hmmm hmmm. So, it wasn't really – it didn't effect my writing, and if did, it did in way that were not helpful.

SS: And what about for *Iowa* – your second book?

PM: Well, *Iowa* was very different, because it was much more autobiographical book about growing up gay in Iowa and then – I actually wrote in *Iowa* -- it's a two-part book, the first part is actually the guy's childhood, and then it's like 10 or 15 years later and his lover has died in New York and he goes back to Iowa. So, I was actually writing that while Dino was dying. And, I guess I was kind of starting to mourn him already. And – so, AIDS was certainly a big part of my writing, but not ACT UP.

SS: So, when Dino died, did that change your relationship with ACT UP?

PM: At that point, I was pretty well out of ACT UP. ACT UP had become very divisive, in terms of the meetings. And, I had friends in ACT UP, but there weren't as many actions going on, as I recall. So, I was pretty much out of ACT UP, by the time Dino died.

SS: What year was that?

PM: He's been dead nine years now, so that would have been '94. But, I'll tell you the thing about ACT UP and Dino is that I had a lot of shame about Dino and my

drug use when I was with him, and how I felt like I didn't really take care of my lover, who was dying. But, I remember getting arrested at Day of Desperation and coming home, and Dino said, you're my hero.

Tape II
00:10:00

And I think, for a long, long time – I think for a long time, that was the only thing I had to be proud of in my life.

So, I don't know what relationship that has. I think that for me, almost everything associated with ACT UP seemed to me to be a point of pride and a point of connection, whereas the rest of life seemed so out of control and so self destructive. And, I've really hung on to that, you know. Those words.

SS: Why do you think things started to go into disarray inside ACT UP around '93 and '94 – that's when you felt that it was ...

PM: People were really tired and things weren't getting better. So, I think there was a huge amount of undirected grief and anger and, you know, it always happens. We turn it back on ourselves, and – you know, many people have said that actually in terms of that kind of an organization – of a really, truly grassroots political organization, that that's a fairly long lifespan for ACT UP. So, maybe it was coming to its end. The people who tended to remain had very strong political beliefs that were not just based on personal grief, and they had larger goals for ACT UP, that I didn't necessarily share. I didn't share the idea of AIDS being the route to our civil rights, I think. And, I also didn't share the idea that AIDS could be utilized to kind of deal with inequities in our health care system. I felt all of that was exacerbated by AIDS, but, truthfully, my connection was about gay men dying with AIDS. So, as there was an increasing feeling about how ACT UP had to become more politically integrated, I guess, with other causes,

I also didn't feel as – it just became harder, because it became a much more complicated group. You know, it basically was downtown – white, downtown New Yorkers, at the beginning, who all moved in that vaguely arty circle. So, although we didn't know each other, we did know each other. And, we kind of knew how to deal with each other. But, as ACT UP tried to diversify, I don't think we knew how to deal with each other any more.

SS: Do you mean racially?

PM: I think I mean more economically than racially – and class wise. And, of course, the two are linked many times, but there was a shared ethos, sort of around a group of people who started in ACT UP. And, many of those people died and others kind of got burned out. And, also the newness of ACT UP – because there had been so little like it, it was just incredibly invigorating at the beginning. But, you know, it's like being in a new relationship – you don't see the bad things at the beginning because it's so exciting. And, I think that's what happened. It just got all that anger – also, the people who stayed in ACT UP – aside from the people who were very politically committed, were the crazy people. And there were a lot of really crazy, really angry people, who had other agendas. You know, the Jim Fouratts of the world, who – and all it takes, amazingly, among a thousand people in the room, is one crazy angry person, to kind of change that whole dynamic, because suddenly you're focused on the problems of one person, not the goals of the entire group.

SS: What about the new meds – like the protease inhibitors? How do you think that impacted on ACT UP?

Tape II
00:15:00

PM: At the point that I left ACT UP, people weren't really feeling better. I think that happened a little bit later. I'm sure – although I wasn't there to really witness it – but, in general, people thought, I need a break. Or, there were fewer people dying, so there were fewer people that had that kind of personal connection that would come in through grief or fear.

SS: What about artistically? What would you say was the long-term influence of ACT UP on the New York art world?

PM: I think the New York art world poses a lot about caring about social issues and it almost never does. It really cares about almost nothing other than the New York art world. And, I think ACT UP was that kind of one, brief, shining moment where a lot of really important people in the art world really did care. And so –

SS: Why did they care?

PM: I think they cared because of personal connections. They were dying, people they knew were dying. But, also they cared because there was a way for them to participate and a way that seemed radical, but it was also safe, because they knew lots of people. And, you know, ACT UP was very savvy in how it presented itself to the world, and how it used really good graphics. I think the graphics in ACT UP were one of the key, key things that allowed us to move beyond, kind of a small group of insiders.

SS: What were the names of the people behind those graphics?

PM: Marlene McCarty and Don Moffett of Bureau who were both members of Gran Fury. Gran Fury really drove the graphics of ACT UP. Even when they no longer did the graphics, they set the standard. And now, if you look at a demonstration – I was looking at the – some peace demonstrations the other day – all of those typefaces are

influenced by ACT UP. They all look like ACT UP signs, because people had never thought to use the best typographical standards before, in terms of protest graphics. So, I think it just gave a message to the New York art world that these are our own people, and it's okay to be a part of this.

SS: Well, the graphics you're saying influenced protest work, but did ACT UP have an aesthetic influence on art and fine art?

PM: Yeah, I think that it – well, yes and no. I think that ACT UP was very much a part of a group of artists who were working in, like, the late 80s – like, Barbara Kruger, like Jenny Holzer, like Donald Moffett's work at that time – that was very explicit in its political stance. And, I think, actually, there was a negative response to that. People felt, people felt like that work wasn't lasting or it was too obvious. So, strangely enough, I think ACT UP may have had the effect of pushing people away from overtly political art works. I think that everything seemed to become much more obscure after that.

SS: The same artists?

PM: The artists who survived became more obscure.

SS: Who are you thinking of – can you say their names?

PM: Well, for example, if you look at Donald Moffett's work – his work, when I first knew him, was – it tended to be text over an image and a lot of times it was pornographic images with text over it. Now, it's abstract paintings, and it's very hard to draw a through-line through that kind of a transition in an artist's career. So, there must have been the experience of feeling overwhelmed with the specificity of the kind of work he was doing.

But, I think the effect of ACT UP in terms of the New York art world was not on art. I think it was more about – first of all, powerful gay men in the art world coming out for the first time, or doing something political for the first time.

SS: Like who?

PM: Well, for example, my great hero – Philip Yenawine, who was the Director of Education at the Museum of Modern Art, basically forced MoMA to respond to AIDS, even if it was only through something as kind of symbolic as Day Without Art. That kind of interaction was not happening in the New York art world. People like Tom Sokolowsky – you know, people allowing – the New Museum to put up Gran Fury's work in its windows; the Venice Biennale presenting Gran Fury. I think there was an acknowledgement that certain things were so important that the rules had to get skewed. And that was mostly about gay men finally using their power in the art world.

SS: Okay, one last question. Here it is, you've been out of ACT UP for almost 10 years. You're happily married, you live in a beautiful house, you have a very nice life, and yet, you're about to publish a book about AIDS and gay men and a lot of the conflicts that came out at that time. Why are you still living with those questions? What do you think is driving that?

PM: I think what's driving it, is that I realize that I still didn't have a connection with the gay community. And I had this hunger for my past. When I left New York, many, many things in every area of my life had gone wrong. And, how I dealt with it is, I moved to Los Angeles, and it was like this wall came down between my current life and my past life. So, the book was an attempt to remember both my immediate history, and then a whole history that I had never known, but been fascinated

with, which was the kind of sexual revolution of gay men in the 70s. And, I realized that I still carried around with me a huge amount of shame, about my sexuality, about my sexual conduct in certain times of my life. And, that I didn't have a way of resolving my past life with my current life, because I have a very – I don't know what it is – it's a very traditional life here in L.A. that does not quite fit with everything that happened before it. So, from a personal perspective it was a way to integrate that and not to forget it, and to feel like my life wasn't a series of failures, but that I had done something important.

SS: Okay. Thank you, Patrick.

PM: Thanks.