

NEW RELEASE 2026



Jason Langer *Subrosa and the Cult of Aphrodite*

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Exotic dancers, drag queens and clowns: an intimate portrait of Portland's nighttime performance scene

Photographer Jason Langer turns his lens toward Portland, Oregon's (The Rose City) exuberant and eccentric world of night performance. Over the course of five years, he documented and interviewed more than one hundred performers whose acts blur the boundaries between disguise and revelation, using their bodies as vehicles for both erotic and political expression. His intimate color photographs, captured backstage in strip clubs and in the performers' homes, offer a rare glimpse behind the spectacle.

Following in the tradition of EJ Bellocq, who made photographs in the brothels of New Orleans' Storyville district in the 1910s, and Susan Meiselas, who documented carnival strippers in the 1970s, Langer worked within the context of Portland's reputation as having the most strip clubs per capita in the United States and Oregon's landmark 1987 Supreme Court case, *State v. Henry*, which essentially declared nudity an act of free speech.

In *Subrosa*—Latin for »under the rose,« a phrase associated with secrecy and what is spoken in confidence—the title also evokes Portland, the "City of Roses," where these photographs and interviews took place, and the subculture beneath its beds of roses. Langer is drawn to those who express identity and defiance through movement, costume, and ritual, where drag queens, burlesque dancers, clowns, aerialists, and vaudevillians transform personal histories of pain, liberation, and resilience into art. The work is part collaboration, part confession. Langer's coffee-toned portraits and bourbon-infused, interviews are deeply intimate, empathetic and remain wholly his own. In photographing these »creatures of the night,« he confronts ques-

tions of vulnerability, gender, beauty, and power, revealing a subculture that thrives in secrecy yet longs to be seen.

Subrosa and the Cult of Aphrodite is both a document and a mirror—an ode to those who, while still managing to pay the rent, dare to live, love, and perform provocatively »under the rose.«

Jason Langer (b. 1967) is an American photographer, based in in Portland, Oregon, whose work explores themes of identity, intimacy, and the human condition. His photographs have been widely exhibited, are held in major public and private collections, and have been recognized with numerous grants and awards. Langer has published four monographs to date and teaches photography for institutions including Santa Fe Workshops and Photo Phlo.

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Press Images



01_Layne © Jason Langer



02_»There is no doubt those who view my performances come away with my message of embracing and loving my dance, my imagination and myself as a Black American woman.« –Sandria © Jason Langer



03_Una © Jason Langer



04_Sophia © Jason Langer



05_Tiare © Jason Langer



06_Wanderlust Party © Jason Langer



07_ »I can create any entity, any being, any version of myself to live onstage. I want to be remembered by the emotion that the audience experienced of me as an artist and that I was someone who really loved and cared for his audience.« – Johnny © Jason Langer



08_ »I'm a dancer, I'm an auto mechanic, I'm a dog trainer, I'm a college student, I'm a homeless punk, I'm a tattoo artist, I'm a bass player, I'm a hide tanner and bone processor.« –Silver © Jason Langer



09_ Outside Dante's © Jason Langer



10_ »It was here that I learned what it meant to be a woman, to claim space; the necessity of self-worth in the midst of 100 hungry eyes.« –Clementine © Jason Langer



11_ »It doesn't bother me when people stare at me because I'm weird. It bothers me when people stare at me because I'm a trans woman.« –Vera © Jason Langer



12_ »I like witnessing people or couples or groups have an arousing, heart-and-mind-opening experience. It's been good for my queer identity too, and some people tell me their secrets because I'm safer than the people they are closest to.« – Elle © Jason Langer