

CLAMP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Robert Calafiore | *As My Eyes Open and You Disappear*

November 7–December 20, 2025

Artist reception: Friday, November 7, 2025, 6 – 8 PM



CLAMP is pleased to present "*As My Eyes Open and You Disappear*," Robert Calafiore's second solo show with the gallery. This exhibition brings together Calafiore's newest nude studies, conceived as staged, theatrical tableaux. Drawing on art historical precedents, from Greek and Roman statuary to odalisques, as well as the expressive positioning of George Platt Lynes and the story tale sequencing of Duane Michals, each composition unfolds like a scene from a play, where gesture, posture, and illumination orchestrate both narrative and affect. The bodies appear simultaneously present and ephemeral, illuminated with the translucency of stained glass.

Robert Calafiore shoots analogue, entirely without digital technologies, constructing custom pinhole cameras which expose light directly onto chromogenic sheets of paper. Producing singular color prints through extremely prolonged exposures ranging from several minutes to hours, this method requires models to hold poses with disciplined stillness while the camera records their presence. Any movement creates blur and distortion, collapsing time into layered, ghost-like traces. Each figure emerges as a luminous, sculptural presence—its monumentality achieved through scale and tonal depth, its vulnerability through the body's translucent rendering and exposed gestures.

The artist's practice, rooted in meticulous engagement with and mastery of optical technology, recalls early 19th-century experimental photography while opening a dialogue with classical representations of the human form.

CLAMP

As early photography pioneer William Henry Fox Talbot described his own camera obscura images, these are pictures "drawn by the hand of nature" rather than the artist's hand—a world made visible through the camera's unique vision.

Calafiore's choice to work with the most primitive photographic technology is a deliberate response to our digital age. Observing his students at Hartford Art School increasingly challenged by the construction of functional pinhole cameras and the sensitive handling of physical materials, he recognized how digital shortcuts had eroded fundamental skills. In response, he turned away from digital technology entirely and built his own cameras: "I chose to use the pinhole camera and make work that turned in the opposite direction of new digital technologies. I wanted to make work that was relevant, felt contemporary, looked high tech, but yet was made with the simplest camera to capture an image. I wanted the work to be physical, labor intensive, require strong skills in technique and craft."

Calafiore presents his images as photographic negatives, with darkness rendered as light and colors appearing as their approximate opposites. This reversal is not a technical limitation but an artistic choice that reveals a world that cannot be seen otherwise. The negative image demands that viewers engage more directly, studying each photograph closely to reconstruct mentally what they are perceiving. One must slow down and examine the interplay of light, form, and time duration with sustained attention in resistance to the instant nature of contemporary image culture.

A first-generation Italian-American, raised within a large, traditional Roman Catholic family, Calafiore's earliest interactions with ritual, devotion, and labor inform both the discipline and reverence inherent in his practice. Not only the curious inverted palette characteristic to pinhole prints, but the artist's dramatic *mis en scène* reference religious iconography from stained glass windows to painted biblical depictions.

Calafiore's practice functions as a meditation on perception and the materiality of seeing. By privileging labor-intensive, analog processes, he foregrounds the tactile and enduring dimensions of the human body, transforming the nude figure into a site of both aesthetic contemplation and an inquiry of perception. The exhibition stages a dialogue between intimacy and spectacle, classical reference and contemporary sensibility, permanence and disappearance.

Born in New Britain, Connecticut, Calafiore earned a BFA from Hartford Art School and an MFA from the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has exhibited nationally and internationally and continues to shape contemporary photographic discourse as an educator and administrator at Hartford Art School.

Image: © Robert Calafiore; "Elusive Slumber," 2025; Two chromogenic prints (Unique); 16 x 40 inches, overall; 16 x 20 inches, each.