

# ERIC SANDERS: MOMENTS

*Essay by Gary Brewer*

The exhibition “Moments” is an intimate proposal: the artist, Eric Sanders, is seeking to convey the ebb and flow of emotional states between himself and his girlfriend, Anna. Using a codified language of color: red for Anna and blue for himself, Sanders has set out to chart this subtle space by creating a series of prints that explore the changing dynamics of their relationship.

His ambition to capture the most intimate and vulnerable emotions in his images is a form that has been explored by many artists and poets who have opened their hearts and souls to reveal the tender viscera of the complexities of love.

Sanders’ series of prints is in part inspired by his and Anna’s commitment to develop a lasting relationship, one that evolves and deepens over time. The color code that the prints are based on comes from their work with a ‘relationship coach’ who uses these colors to speak with them about the dynamics of their relationship; it is a way for them to explore the contours of self and the boundaries and overlaps of the liminal space in which love and emotion move.

Sanders said of this work, “It was challenging to open myself up and to reveal the most vulnerable aspects of one’s self. I also want my explorations of our relationship to be something Anna would see as true to her experience of our life together, it was emotionally challenging to create this body of work.”

Primarily a painter, Sanders has embarked into a new medium: printmaking. He is freely exploring the many techniques available to render these fusions of photography, lithography transfer, mono print, chine collé, collagraph and direct painting. The photographs were carefully selected from iPhone photos that he and Anna captured of each other during the course of the day: sleeping, cooking, painting, playing and lost in thought. The photos are a diaristic record of their lives that were taken informally, as a record of moments from their life together.

In the piece, *Oneiric Gesture No. 1*, Sanders imbues an image of himself sleeping with dream-like halftones of a grainy midnight blue. The word oneiric comes from the Greek word oneiros meaning ‘dreams’. This image suggests the artist as a dreamer seeking the images that arise from dreams: the wellspring of our imagination and the unconscious narratives that seek to give shape and meaning to our world. It is interesting that the image is also suggestive of a film still. Films have often been compared to dreams, suggestive of a para-oneiric state where one’s consciousness is enveloped in a dream-like state, while viewing the images on the screen.

In *Eminence Clasp*, Anna gently grasps her wrist just above the hand. It captures an introspective feeling: the elegant entwined pose conveys an ease of being, and a state of inward reflection. The color is a subtle shade of deep violet: the blue and red of their two selves merging toward a deep purple. The lithograph is grainy and imbues the image with an ephemeral quality: it is the fleeting memory of a private moment of quiet repose. The image quality alludes to the transitory nature of life, of the passage of time, and the collective moments captured in our memories.

*Small Axe* is a dramatic image of Anna- capturing her in full swing as she is making a two-handed, overhead axe throw. The powerful physicality and commitment of her dynamic movement conveys her athletic prowess. Anna works as a stuntwoman and martial artist in the film industry. The striking red of the print is overlaid with a vestigial, abstract linear design in blue: a creative gesture that playfully represents Sanders’ presence in Anna’s life. The lightness of the design dances over the powerful force of Anna’s image: the two balancing each other in a dance—their two personas fully expressing themselves and complementing each other.

Each of these prints conveys something about their relationship, a fluid dynamic unfolding is captured in these images. It is also a reflection of the spontaneity and boldness of Sanders’ approach to learning a new medium, applying the gestural abstraction of his painting to these photolithographs, as well as the various techniques available to him in the print medium. Something in the freshness of the ‘beginner’s mind’ of these works is a portent of their relationship as it evolves, keeping it fresh, alive and growing.

In *Veiled Anna*, a mystery obscures her face; the swift, bold brush strokes may express passion and desire, or they may convey the mystery of self, always moving, cloud-like in its mercurial metamorphic aspect. Anna’s face is close- the deep magenta red and the deeper tones moving into darkness add an expressive poetry to her portrait. Her eyes look with an honest openness into Sanders’ and into ours. We see something about their life together through her gaze which speaks in a language known only to herself and Eric.

The fluidity of Sanders’ ability to embrace printmaking, a new medium for him, is impressive. The artist has said that with painting he felt more pressure from the weight of history: that the standard he was held to, as a painter, was a measure that he felt he had to strive to meet. In printmaking, the psychological pressure is not as complex; he feels more freedom to experiment and discover without reservation—and one can sense this in these series of prints.

Artists seek out ways to communicate their personal experience in the world and reinterpret it through their art. Sanders has taken the most intimate of experiences—his and Anna’s life together, their emotional commitment and the journey of their evolving relationship—and created a vision that reflects the spontaneous, joyful and unexpected journey that is unfolding in their lives.

These are emotionally honest works of art that explore a deeply personal space. They are vulnerable, joyful and filled with an optimistic sparkle that shimmers through the layers of pigment to convey a color theory of love.