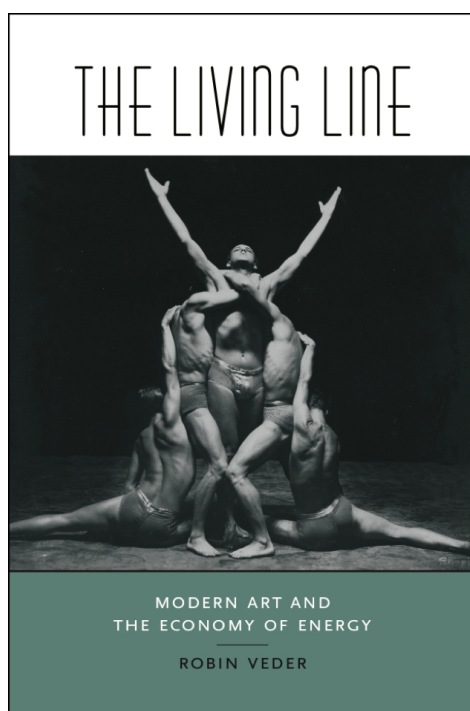


The Living Line: Modern Art and the Economy of Energy

by Robin Veder. (Interfaces: studies in visual culture). Dartmouth College Press, dist. by UPNE, April 2015. 384 p. ill. ISBN 9781611687248 (pbk.), \$40.00.

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The Living Line: Modern Art and the Economy of Energy, is a bold reconceptualization of the evolution of early American modernism. Robin Veder creates strong and previously uncharted connections between the forgotten histories of body cultures, physiological aesthetics, and the history of art. She reveals that modernist artists and art consumers often narrated their experiences with the visual arts by borrowing terms used in studies relating to the body, such as dance, kinesthesia, and physical education.

Divided into eleven chapters, Veder postulates that American modernists consciously took into account not only their own body movements, but also the viewer's physical experience. The first five chapters focus heavily on the artist Arthur B. Davies and his artistic practice, in which he embraced the study of body energy efficiencies and physiological aesthetics starting with the "Life of Inhalation" concept. Here, Davies ascribes the lifelike figures in visual art to the posture

of the figure, which evokes a sense of breathing. Later, this idea is translated beyond the human representation and the "desired result, such as a stronger breath, could be stimulated by visual formal elements, such as expanding and spirally compositions" (p. 30).

In the last six chapters, Veder shifts her focus to other iconic modernists, specifically those associated with the Stieglitz Circle, the Société Anonyme, and the Barnes Foundation. Concentrating on Georgia O'Keeffe, as part of the Stieglitz Circle, Veder states that the "kinesthetic awareness of bodily practice was part of O'Keeffe's education and later it became integral to her stylistic development and maintenance of self and art" (p. 209). These artists not only were exposed to the ideas of body culture and energy, but they practiced them in their life

and deliberately illustrated these ideas in their abstract art, hoping to affect the viewer in a physical manner.

The narrative nature of the book, the widely accessible academic tone, and the theme structure of the chapters, makes the concepts easy to digest. The text includes many black-and-white images, as well as twenty-four color reproductions that represent each of the discussed artists and their work with movement. The use of primary source quotes gives agency to the author's ideas and re-illuminates the voices of the artists themselves. Veder also provides an extensive bibliography, speaking to her breadth of knowledge on the subject. She plainly concludes with a simple yet poignant statement, "Davies, O'Keeffe, Dreier, Barnes, and their peers believed that art is art because when it moves us, it moves us" (p. 324).