

VizCult

The Dean's Speaker Series in Art History  
2018 Fall Semester

presents

Samuel Johnson

Assistant Professor  
Art & Music Histories, Syracuse University

A Typographical Architecture?  
El Lissitzky and the Discourse of the City

Wednesday 28 November  
5:00 PM in FA 143



Although El Lissitzky's horizontal skyscraper, *Der Wolkenbügel*, has served as a canonical citation for generations of architects, the project itself has rarely been the object of sustained interpretive effort. In his published proposal for a series of eight *Wolkenbügel*s along Moscow's boulevard ring, Lissitzky responded to positions on the skyscraper staked out by Le Corbusier, Kazimir Malevich, and Lissitzky's own colleagues in the Association of New Architects, ASNOVA, with a vision of the building as a monumental semaphore. This lecture tracks Lissitzky's project from its genesis in Switzerland to its 1926 publication in Moscow, placing it at the nexus of debates on planning, preservation, and circulation that preceded the modernist consensus of CIAM. It argues that Lissitzky attempted to justify the typological novelty of the *Wolkenbügel* with an orienting function that he conceived as typographical.

Samuel Johnson (PhD, Harvard) is a specialist in the art and architecture of the Russian and Soviet avant-gardes. His research focuses primarily on the relationship between abstract art and politics in Russia between the World Wars.