

Why was the Empire State Building built so tall?

It was constructed in the 1920s during a time of economic prosperity for New York City and was constructed simply for the title of "The World's Largest Skyscraper" and challenged other construction agencies in America and around the world. It was initially going to be 1,000 feet tall but was increased to over 1,250 feet after Walter Chrysler had increased the scope of its plans to dwarf the original size.

I've read these stories and I understand on a conscious level that this was the reason the Empire State Building was constructed so tall. But on a deeper level, I know that it was built to mock me.

It looms over New York City glowering down at me as I look up from the base of the tower, impossibly vast with its many empty windows. I've been to the very top and I've looked down at the base.

Typically, both views of the tower would emerge fantasies of falling from the top, my body crashing upon the rough concrete pavement of the street below or an unlucky near-by car. My bones splintered and shattered, my neck broken, my arms and legs twisted into strange angles, teeth cracked and dug sharply into my jaw and unusual positions and my skull flattened violently on one side. The flesh on my body that would not already be a cascading, unrecognisable fractal of splitting open wounds, would be bruised, all the burst vessels behind my skin creating a sickly rotten purple texture spilled across my pulverised body.

The dizzying heights of the buildings seemed to be constructed only to inspire such visions in my mind, why else? The tower was primarily used for office space or as a monument to itself. A man-made object, designed to be designed.

Of course, the Empire State Building is no longer the tallest building in the world, not even in New York City. The World Trade Centre would dwarf the tower 50 years later and then that building would be destroyed and replaced with the One World Trade Centre in its place, a hundred meters taller. But by that point, all three buildings had been surpassed by the Burj Khalifa in Dubai, the current tallest building in the world with a total height of 829.8 meters tall. The construction costs alone for that building was 1.5 billion US dollars and the deaths of four people during construction.

The building's stated purpose was to give the country of Dubai international recognition. The Burj Khalifa was originally the Burj Dubai but was renamed after the financial problems during construction were relieved by the ruler of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Khalifa. The man living on the top is an Indian businessman, George V. Nereaparambil, who owns 900 other apartments in the building.

110,000 tons of concrete, 55,000 tons of steel rebar, and 22 million man-hours for a tourist attraction.

I've been to the top of the Burj Khalifa, once, not on the final point like many reckless idiots are one to climb. It was for a business trip and I was going to speak with some very monetarily endowed clients. But when I looked out from the highest man-made viewing platform in the world, I expected to see the full expanse of our world, but when I looked down, it all felt so barren, empty. I could not help thinking about how dull it all was. Here was as far as I could look upon the world and I was dreadfully bored by it all. I was not satisfied with the limited scope that had been granted to me.

I instead found my attention being drawn upwards at the deep blue sky of that summer's morning. Unlike this tower, it did not end, only expanding forward, continuously. It was great and vast and unimaginably eclipsing. I understood that the blue sky was merely a curtain, a blanket hiding the truth, hiding what was really up there in the true night sky.

I suddenly had the strangest feeling, I felt that my feet were about to detach from the ground and I would begin falling, falling, endlessly into that blue sky, I would look upwards and see the city rise above me as I fall away from my platform, helplessly grasping at to anything that might keep me rooted before I accelerate into the vast deep blue of the sky.

It has been many years since I felt that sensation and it has not left me. I make a point to not look at the sky when it is clear outside.

My friends, or work associates, noticed the changes in my behaviour, my sleepless nights and some of my new obsessions. However, I had still been able to hold onto my wealth and influence despite my new aversion to heights and tall office building meetings. Whenever I climb high enough I get that dizzying feeling, that anticipation that I might trip and fall for a very long time.

I barely remember my dreams but when I do, they always involve me looking upwards from the top of an impossible tower, the wind cold and biting, looking at the sky and seeing... something, moving, shifting, undulating. But I could never see it properly because I was too close to the ground and I needed to get higher. Hypnagogic jerks became much more common for me when waking up.

My friends called the buildings which have haunted my dreams "Skyscrapers." The name conjures images of a haggard, iron-coated man desperately scratching at something it cannot reach. Sky-scraper can barely be called correct, it reaches out to nothing, falling too short to sink its nails into anything concrete, least of all the sky. It may rise above the clouds but anything further is still so dreadfully out of reach.

But yet, I still sympathise with the stone skewers sticking out of the mass of the cities, since that day on the Burj Khalifa then I have felt the need to be closer, to reach higher than ever before. Unlike those other fools who believed themselves greater, who created monuments to

themselves and nothing else, I would create a skyscraper worthy of the name and created for a higher cause than personal ego.

Even before my trip to the highest man-made point in the world, the idea to construct my own 'Skyscraper' has been congested in my mind like a parasitic tumour for the past 30 years and the need to get closer, to get further up than any other building has flooded my head like a viscous puss.

My friends don't seem to understand my need, they look at me strangely when I try to explain my process, my all-consuming desire, they seem to get lost, lose their grip, experience their own internal vertigo at the expanse of my ideas. I rarely bring the topic up to them anymore as I suspect that the longer I discuss it, the more that they are certain that I am mad.

I have talked to a lot of architects about constructing the next "World's Tallest Building" and, while their work was invaluable to determine where and how something of this magnitude would be made, the designs always fell short of how tall I really wanted it.

Looking back, I'd say that the thing that deterred me from a design the most was the fixed number next to the meter unit. Buildings obviously require mountains of fixed variables for it to be approved and the numbers had always exceeded expectations with every new architect, but the idea of a limit to how tall my tower must always be made me feel constrained, incomplete, unsatisfied.

I had been through 30 odd architects, 26 designers and 15 government officials when one architect whose name I have forgotten and whose face was recently embedded into the dirt came to me with a design that finally satiated my desires. A modular design that would, in its original plans, already be 937 metres high, easily surpassing the Burj Khalifa by 100 metres but, if I wanted to, I could easily request for an extension of the tower by readjusting the area of the base. These additions to the design finally satisfied me and we got to work.

I won't go into extensive detail over the entire construction effort but what I will say is that the tower is being built in a barren country and the original design was complete in 10 years before any extra height was added to the building. Construction was slow going as the area in which we were building the tower was sparsely populated, with many new roads needing to be laid down to bring all the material over to the construction sites safely.

The initial money for the project was paid by myself and my many companies directly, however, this was not a financial plan that would last the entire construction cycle so I eventually had to start begging for money from insurance companies, other billionaires with an interest in my project and Government spending agencies, promising them naming rights, investment payments, personal luxury suites, anything to keep their cash spent on my building, with very little of that income paid towards the workers.

At least 14 of the labourers working on the project have died directly, due to a fall from the tower five dozen quit the project after a week, eight jumped off the building during their shift and six disappeared while working on the higher levels. The many workers that had quit have said that they felt unsafe while working on the project. But people are easily replaceable with the exceedingly vast budget of my project.

It was around this time when my insomnia became much worse. Sleep had not come easily for me for years but from the construction of the project onwards, my condition deteriorated. The little sleep I did manage to get did not alleviate my fatigue, in fact, it seemed to make me feel much worse.

The dreams I do remember from those restless nights are strange and concerning. I would find myself wandering the construction site of my tower at night, climbing the unfinished stairs and the cheap messy scaffolding all the way to the top, always left unsatisfied with the height I had reached from my tower. I would gaze up at the sky so constantly out of my reach and watch. I did not know what for.

I have questioned myself at times, wondering whether these events were not in fact dreams, and wondering whether these had actually happened to me and that I was just retroactively rationalising these events in my head as personal fiction. I have to discard such thoughts, they are plainly ridiculous. The tower is protected by security at all times, if I had been climbing to the top, they would obviously notice me. Also, I have yet to break a single bone in my body, and all my dreams end with me falling from the highest point back down to the cold, hard concrete.

Dream or not, the sensation of waking up still brings me large amounts of pain

My bones ache from cracking and snapping and bending and breaking while my flesh throbbed with bruises that were never there. I have had several doctors appointments and despite my fatigue, despite my insomnia, despite the raw dull throbs ringing from my body at every hour of the day, they can never find anything physically wrong with me, any reason why I hurt so much.

Currently, my tower stands at, at least, one thousand five hundred metres in the air, the height extended due to countless renovations. Already it was the world's tallest man-made object and the construction of the interior could finally begin if it were not for the fog. It was thick, dense and heavy and the obscured vision and the intense cold meant working in it would be far too dangerous for the labourers so further construction had to be delayed until it abated. A set back to be sure but one that we have dealt with before.

Last week I had the strangest dream. The tower was empty as I ascended upwards like I've done so many times before, the fog biting at my exposed skin, coating the inside of my mouth with a painful frost. I had climbed this tower a hundred times in my dreams, always getting taller, higher, grander and I had memorised its exact layout despite never truly being in there.

It took me a while but eventually, I broke above the mist and fog to see the brilliant sun shine down upon hundreds of kilometres of steel, concrete and rebar, stretching out across that backdrop of royal blue sky. And I saw in delight that there was still so much more of the tower to climb.

If I remember correctly, it was supposed to be nighttime, yet the world above the fog was clearly illuminated by that streaming afternoon light. I did not question this at the time, such is the nature of dreams I suppose.

I climbed to the very top which took what felt like hours, constantly aware of the dangers of slipping as I reached the top, the pole that jutted out of the top of the structure which was only just wide enough to allow me to stand on my feet and reach up.

I gazed at the infinite horizon, the landscape seemed so barren, empty, worthless. A featureless crusty space, marked with the occasional building that was dwarfed by my immense tower, my Sky-Scraper. I found the ground to be so disinteresting, but the sky on the other hand, as I stared up at it, I was closer than I have ever been before.

Its deep blue was vast and eternal and more infinite than the land below, I felt that sensation again, that feeling that I first felt on the Burj Khalifa, that jolt that had guided me towards this moment, that sensation as though I could fall into the expanse, as if my feet would relinquish its grip on the steel that they rested upon and just fall forever.

My hand raised above my head as I had done many times before but never at this height. I stretched my hands upwards into the nothingness. It was at that moment that I felt resistance. I felt something soft, spongy... wet. I could see that fingers had disappeared into the blue of the sky. I was so confused, I scraped my hands against the substance. When I pulled my hand away from the sky, a thick sticky liquid covered it. I was sure that it was not blood, I doubt that I even broke the skin.

I looked back up and could see that the sky had shifted, moved, undulated. I realised that from this peak I could not take the true scope of what I had just touched. I could only feel it from dizzying heights but it was this height that had restricted my view and I now know only of its continuous impossibility.

The spongy substance seemed to melt in my hand as I felt so confused. I took a step back to try to see the edge, to get the full picture of what was there before me. My foot missed the platform and I fell from the tower.

I do not believe that any of these things that I have just described actually happened. However, dream or not, when I woke up that night, I was lying on the concrete base of my skyscraper looking upwards at the still sky.

That was a week ago and I have not slept since. I do not talk with my friends or colleagues anymore, they cannot stand the sight of my permanently messy hair and my red face burnt from the wind. I do not know if I even care anymore. Perhaps I might have at once but my mind is still so far above the earth now, still trying to reach that siren song of blue sky for reasons I have long forgotten.

My tower has just finished its 396th floor. It's still too short and we are planning to add another. I know that when the Skyscraper is finally finished, I will be able to finally rest, but somewhere inside me, I know that I will never be satisfied and that I will sleep when my body has splintered and shattered on a stone concrete surface at the base of the world's tallest man made object.