

The first time I visited the Burj Khalifa in Dubai was in May 2022, which was two years after I had already created works about it, as well as on my cousin who was living in the city. My obsession with the building had been accumulating for two years prior to my visit. It started when I found out that steel from the former GDR Palace of the Republic was recycled into the Burj Khalifa. Growing up in the newly formed German states, near Berlin, the Palace of the Republic was a known companion.

I arrived in Dubai as an observer on a research trip, following a fanatic interest, like a stalker finally approaching its object of desire. Admittedly, during the drive from the airport to the hotel, I kept wanting to glance up to see the oversized glittering skyscraper, which was not particularly difficult to find in the night sky. The Burj Khalifa, the tallest building in the world, seems to stand out completely from its surroundings, quite out of proportion compared to the skyscrapers near it. Its beauty is questionable, though its construction is impressive. The Burj Khalifa stands on sandy terrain in a windy desert. At 826 m, it rises almost 1 km into the air.

The next day's tour, *At the Top, Burj Khalifa*, was, as with so many tourist attractions, anti-climactic. Reaching its entrance through the Dubai Mall, the biggest mall in the world, consumerism and infotainment engulfed the nervous crowds. Most visitors scurried quickly past the exhibition, which was showcasing the complex construction and maintenance process. People were rushing to get to the lifts that go up to the 124<sup>th</sup> floor at 36 km/h. When I reached the top, I wandered around on the viewing platforms feeling somewhat lost. I browsed the souvenir shops and watched other people taking photos of their companions. No one else seemed to have the idea of going up by themselves. After all, if alone, who would capture their memory? When I tried to take a picture of myself at one of the many designated photo spots featuring angel wings hovering over the Dubai landscape, a photographer on duty took pity on me and captured me in various social media-ready angles quickly on my phone.





