

Neither Here Nor There:
Marcia Huyer's *What's Up There, Anyhow?*

Katie Bethune-Leamen

It is perhaps inevitable that if you regard inflatable, 1:160 scale models of iconic skyscrapers, resolutely drooping in a state not quite flaccid, not quite tumescent, the penis becomes a go-to reference. Anointing towering buildings with the adjective 'phallic' isn't news to anyone who has spent any time in the cities of the world where this paradigm of structure exists—it is common parlance, common thought, whether you agree or not.

Marcia Huyer's five sculptures of a selection of the world's best-known skyscrapers—*Taipei 101*, the *Empire State Building*, *Petronas Twin Towers*, and the *Sears Towers*—are inflatable models of these structures. Kept aloft by motors not quite up to the job, the building just can't keep it up. Huyer selected her structural references from the annals of those buildings that have at one time or another held the distinction of being the tallest in the world, that is, until they were each in turn bested by a new, taller structure or the addition of a tall-ifying antenna to an extant one.

Already diminished by their loss of status in the world of skyscraper height, these buildings are now further reduced, not only in scale, but in their ability to even keep upright. Manufactured by Huyer from shimmering two-tone silk, the material evokes bridesmaid dresses and other concerted efforts at formality and dressing-up—proms, for instance.

All of these things have in common the quality of being in-between states. At about human-size, these sculptures are neither impressively small nor large; the reference buildings are incredibly tall, but no longer the tallest; as phallic-forms, they are neither standing nor fallen; the silk from which they are manufactured is nice, sure, but its type and colour-scheme so closely associate it with ill-fitting, unwanted maid-of-honour dresses that it isn't lovely as much as curious. In this way, the works in *What's Up There, Anyhow?* are able to occupy an appealingly unstable space in which an invitation to consider the status of the original buildings, and these objects as sculptural forms is generously offered up.