

The Great Flood of Siberia

– an exhibition by Åsa Elieson at Detroit Gallery

Siberia is often associated with deportation and coldness. Perhaps also with numb constraint and with authorities' exercise of power. However, the first Russian deportation to Siberia concerned a symbol – the town bell of Uglich. In the year of 1581 the tsar son Dimitrij was murdered, and the agitators made sure that the town bell sounded across the fields. The punishment was not long in coming. The insurgents were whipped and had their tongues cut out of their mouths. The bell suffered the same fate, it was whipped and the clapper was torn from its mounting. The quarter-ton piece was then dragged across the Ural mountains to Siberia. There it was left, doomed to eternal silence.

Siberia here in Stockholm is the informal name of an area in Vasastaden. Its central vein is Roslagsgatan, where Detroit Gallery is situated. The nickname Siberia emerged when the area was being built, during the last decades of the 19th century. It was then considered as remote, and having to move there could feel a bit like being deported. The large rental barracks of the area, with their simple design, were mainly built to accommodate people from the working class.

During the same time that Siberia in Stockholm was being built, the great town bell received a public pardon. In 1892 it was repaired and ceremoniously brought back to Uglich. The bell could yet again toll. 62 years later, an accident occurred in Siberia. The water tank in Vanadislunden sprang a leak and eight million litres of water gushed out into the area surrounding Roslagsgatan. Hundreds of basements were filled with water.

Today, drainpipes and waterpipes run through the gallery at Roslagsgatan 21. Gallery visitors can hear the city noise and listen to the inhabitants controlling the movements of the water masses.

On display during "Kulturnatten" will be an installation about ripped out tongues, a disaster of water masses and the water sick demand for vindication of the suppressed languages. Those who wish will also find a trail to follow during the night. From the gallery basement up to the water tank in Vanadislunden.