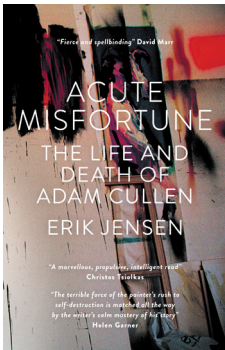


Nib Shortlist 2015 – Book Notes

Acute Misfortune: The Life and Death of Adam Cullen

Erik Jensen

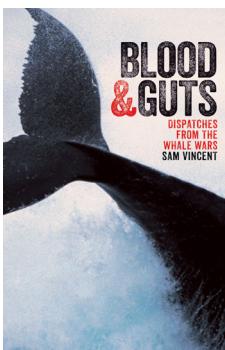


In 2008 the artist Adam Cullen invited journalist Erik Jensen to stay in his spare room and write his biography. What followed were four years of intense honesty and a relationship that became increasingly claustrophobic, including the author being shot, and thrown from a speeding motorbike.

The book is a compelling account of one of Australia's most celebrated artists, the man behind the Archibald Prize-winning portrait of David Wenham. His drug deals, periods of deep self-reflection, court appearance for weapons possession and finally death in 2012 at age 46, are all dealt with. Tender and horrifying, the story is told at close quarters and without judgement.

Blood & Guts: Dispatches from the Whale Wars

Sam Vincent

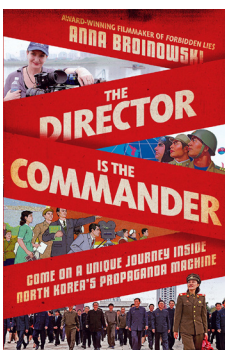


The author sets sail with Sea Shepherd, led by the charismatic and abrasive Paul Watson. He attends the International Court of Justice when Japan's 'scientific' whaling in the Southern Ocean is found to be unlawful. He travels to Japan to investigate why its government doggedly continues to bankroll the unprofitable hunt.

This is a fresh, funny and intelligent look at how Australia has become the most vocal anti-whaling nation on Earth. The author skewers hypocrisy and sheds light on motives, noble and otherwise. With Japan planning to relaunch its lethal program in 2015, the whale wars are set to continue. This is a rivetting work of immersion journalism that lays bare the forces driving this conflict.

The Director is the Commander

Anna Broinowski

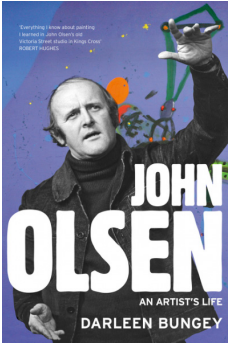


This book centres around the bizarre 21 day shoot the author did in North Korea to make her documentary, *Aim High in Creation!* She meets and befriends artists and apparatchiki, defectors and loyalists, and gains a new insight into the world's most secretive regime. Her adventures are set against a parallel exploration of propaganda in general: both in its ham-fisted North Korean form and its sophisticated but no less pervasive incarnation in the corporate West.

Funny, multi-layered and utterly compelling, the story is a gripping account of an extraordinary journey inside a nation we can usually only see from the outside.

John Olsen

Darleen Bungey

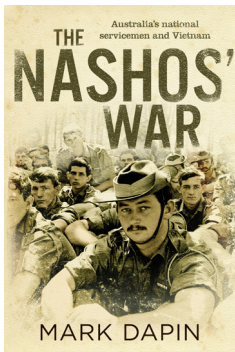


This biography graphically illustrates the forces that drove John Olsen to become one of our greatest artists. An exhilarating book, both trenchant and tender, it strips away the veneer of showmanship and fame to show the substance of a painter driven by a need to depict his country's landscape as Australians had never seen it before.

From a child who was never taken to an art gallery, who learned to draw from comics, we discover the famous artist in the black beret, the writer and poet, the engaging public speaker, the bon vivant - whose life has been defined by an absolute need to paint. He was a shy, stuttering boy, neglected by his alcoholic father, who went on to paint the great Sydney Opera House mural, *Salute to Five Bells*.

The Nashos' War

Mark Dapin



More than 63,000 young Australians were drafted into national service, chosen at random, during the Vietnam War. They came from all walks of life. Some spent two years in Singleton. Others went to Vietnam to fight-and-die in Australia's bloodiest battles including the slaughter at Long Tan. Their random fate came to symbolise the war, and divide a nation.

The Nashos' War tells a vastly more personal and nuanced story of national service and Australia's Vietnam War than that previously heard. More powerfully, it records with extraordinary intensity what it was like to be a bank clerk one day, and fighting for your life in the jungles of Vietnam soon afterwards, describing our most controversial military commitment in the words of these average, remarkable Australians.

Warning: The Story of Cyclone Tracy

Sophie Cunningham



Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. It destroyed an entire city, left 71 people dead and ripped the heart out of Australia's season of goodwill. This is the story of our most iconic natural disaster as seen by those who lived through the devastation - and those who faced the heartbreaking clean-up and the backbreaking rebuild.

From the stirring of the service-station bunting that heralded the catastrophe to the slaughter of the dogs that followed it, the author brings to the tale a novelist's eye for the poignant detail and an exhilarating narrative drive. It's also a sober appraisal of what Tracy means now, as we face more extreme weather with every year that passes.