

Roadworker judges got past the nudes to make their award

A team of 10 roadworkers from civil contracting and road maintenance company Sharpe Bros, dusted off their work boots to select the winner of the 2007 Sharpe Bros Roadworkers Prize.

THE ANNUAL EVENT follows the tradition of the Archibald Packer's Prize, where staff of the Art Gallery of NSW, are given the chance to vote for their favourite Archibald portrait.

Joint MD of Sharpe Bros Michael Sharpe, announced the prizewinner at the Gosford Regional Gallery on the NSW central coast on Monday September 3.

It was an oil-on-canvas work called *Silent City* and was painted by Huang He. He is an internationally-renowned artist, and is currently in China where he has been invited to work on public sculpture.

Roadworker Jason Hodge, said he and his colleagues selected the artwork from the hundreds of entries, because of the quality of the painting and because the image itself appealed to them.

"The streetscape depicts a six-lane highway during an unusually quiet moment. We're always out fixing roads that are busy with traffic and noisy with machinery. It's good to reflect on the stillness and peacefulness of the road in the painting," Hodge said.

Michael Sharpe said, "It was a bit of a stretch to get the crew here this year as

we've been busy fixing road edges all over the Central Coast and Hunter regions with our new Sidewinder train of equipment, which we launched at the Gallery in July.

"However, the guys do take their jobs as art critics just as seriously as they take their jobs as road repairers, even though many people said they wouldn't get past the nude portraits," Sharpe said.

"Last year, the judging skills of our roadworkers were confirmed when the winner of the 2006 Roadworkers Prize, Mike Worrall, became a finalist in the Sulman Prize which is part of the Archibald Prize."

Earlier this year Sharpe Bros announced that it would continue its proud association with the Gosford Regional Gallery, pledging \$25,000 over five years to support Australian artists.

The family-run Sharpe Bros company, has a long history of community involvement through donations, partnerships, volunteering and sponsorships throughout the Central Coast area, and has been making a positive and meaningful contribution to the community for more than 50 years. □



Sharpe roadworkers with the winning entry *Silent City* by Huang He