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Tara Tran poses with some of the paintings in her recent exhibition, *Nervous System*.
PHOTO/MARK EARNST

Art full

Tara Tran

June was a busy, eventful month for

local artist Tara Tran. She graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno with a double major: anthropology and arts. She also had her first solo painting exhibition through the Holland Project. Add in membership with two local bands, and Tran is definitely becoming a fixture in Reno art circles.

"I think Reno has always had a flourishing art scene," Tran said. "There have always been people who are more than willing to create a platform to display artists and people who want to come watch a show or go to a gallery. There's room to do whatever you need to do, but it's also big enough to have people there for you, a foundation and a place to get you started. With my art, I definitely wouldn't be where I am, or even close, without the community here."

Tran's interest in art began in high school. "I was doodling a lot as a way to pay attention in class," Tran said. "I had trouble with my attention span, and drawing gave me something for my hands to do. It was like a hobby and a way to keep from getting too distracted, then I just got more and more into it."

Once she started going to UNR, Tran discovered painting. "I started during my sophomore year of college, and by my junior year I fell love with it," she said. "It's definitely my favorite art form."

Tran also has some experience with printmaking, which she said she still enjoys, "but it's very strict, and it's hard to be messy. And, I'm a messy person."

An emotional type of "messiness" is also prevalent in Tran's other artistic

pursuits. There are the two bands in which she plays guitar and sings: the punk band Maggot and what she calls a "performance art project" called Trust Fall, where she plays solo and is joined by dancer Jelani Best.

"It's an exploration of romance and how it's traditionally used to take women's power away," Tran said. "It's all covers of old romantic songs, jazz and old country."

In Maggot, Tran has a song called "Kill the Imposter," which is also the name of one of her paintings in her exhibition *Nervous System*, which recently wrapped up at the Holland Project Micro Gallery at Biba Coffee Co. In the painting, a person is cutting a very large snake in half with a sword. She said the snake is "symbolic of when I feel unattached to something. I sometimes feel like there are emotions that I don't understand or can't connect to, ones that aren't my own."

Tran said all her paintings are meant to show the physical language of feelings, something that can be universal. "Sometimes your body itself is the most direct expression of your feelings," she said. "It's the way your face contorts when you are sad or when you huddle up when you are scared. You don't need a translation. You see them and you know."

She'll continue to explore her own emotions through painting. Tran plans to stay in Reno ("for a year or so at least," she said), and she's already working on some new paintings. Unlike the smaller canvases that she used for her *Nervous System* show, Tran's next works are going to be truly writ large.

"I've been painting these five-foot pieces, so I'm going to continue working on those," she said. "It's part of the same idea [as *Nervous System*], but it's more about expressing intimacy and embodying what happens when two people come together."