By age 12, Stanislav “Stass” Shpanin ’12 was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as the “Youngest Professional Artist in the World.” While a University of Hartford student, his paintings were displayed in public and private collections, including those of President Heydar Aliyev of Azerbaijan and former U.S. President George W. Bush.

Now Shpanin, who graduated in May with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University’s Hartford Art School, has added Fulbright Scholar to his impressive list of credentials. The highly prestigious U.S. Fulbright Student Award will fund a 10-month, self-directed research project in Russia for Shpanin, beginning in September. The artwork he hopes to create during his fellowship will focus on recapturing the history of pre–World War I Russia.

Shpanin will spend his time in Russia exploring archives, interviewing historians, and surrounding himself with the memories and events of pre–World War I imperialistic Europe. This research will be the conduit for a series of paintings that will reconceptualize the history of Russia that was lost during the Communist Revolution and two world wars.

“As a visual journalist, I want to show that history is not a distant patch of true facts but a living organism with human characteristics,” Shpanin says. “It is a study of human actions by other humans being constantly edited, added, and, in some tragic cases such as the Holocaust, deleted. Today, it is especially important to realize that we are responsible for not only present and future but all three dimensions of time.”

Shpanin is the first University of Hartford student in recent history to accept a Fulbright Award. The Fulbright Program is the flagship international educational exchange program between the United States and 155 countries. It provides grants for study, teaching, and research, and is supported by the U.S. Congress and partner governments worldwide.

Currently a resident of Agawam, Mass., Shpanin was born in Baku, Azerbaijan (a former republic of the Soviet Union), and began studying and producing art at a very early age. By the time he was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records in 2002, he had already exhibited in 10 solo shows throughout the world. He and his family moved to the United States in 2005. While enrolled at the University, Shpanin has won numerous other awards and scholarships.

When he returns to the United States next year, Shpanin intends to pursue graduate school. He has already been approached by museums that want to exhibit the work he completes in Russia.

Read more about Shpanin at www.artstassworld.com.

Editor’s note: Hartford Art School alumna Chotsani Elaine Dean ’98 has also been selected for a Fulbright Award for 2012–13. Dean, an instructor of art and ceramics at Three Rivers Community College in Norwich, Conn., will teach art and conduct research this fall at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India.