Reza Sarhangi (1952-2016)

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It is with deep sadness I announce to the HIAA community the death of a dear friend and colleague, Reza Sarhangi (1952-2016). Although not an art historian, Reza contributed extensively to the study and understanding of geometry in Persian art.

A professor of Mathematics at Towson University in Maryland, he served as Guest Editor for Nexus Network Journal 14/2 (2012) on “Persian Architecture and Mathematics” http://www.nexusjournal.com/volume-14/number-2-autumn-2012.html. He is known for his visionary endeavors that transformed interdisciplinary work in several fields. He founded the Bridges Conference (Mathematical Connections in Art, Music, and Science), which has met annually since 1998, initially at Southwestern College in Winfield, KS, and subsequently with academic collaborations in UK, Spain, Hungary, Portugal, The Netherlands, and South Korea -- this in Finland -- bringing together artists, mathematicians, computer scientists, and the occasional CAA member; I have been privileged to attend on numerous occasions. Papers are archived at http://bridgesmatheart.org.

Reza drew upon his broad interests in Persian art, poetry, music, and drama to attract colleagues from all of these disciplines with shared interests in mathematics. Many initiatives have spun out of Bridges, including the Journal of Mathematics and the Arts (London, Taylor & Francis), and the MoSAIC festival (Mathematics of Science, Arts, Industry and Culture), which travels around to college campuses throughout the US.

Widely published in the fields of math education and mathematics, in recent years Reza devoted himself to the study of Abu’l Wafa Buzjani’s Persian manuscript on geometry for craftsmen. He solved many geometric problems posed by Buzjani, as well as those in an anonymous appended text at the BN in Paris. He was preparing a commentary comparing old and new drawings of these problems for publication. His early study of this work, “Illustrating Abu al-Wafā’ Būzjānī: Flat Images, Spherical Constructions” appeared in Iranian Studies 41/4 (2008) 511-523 in a special issue devoted to “Sciences, Crafts, and the Production of Knowledge in Iran and Eastern Islamic Lands,” which I edited with Elaheh Kheirandish and Najm al-Din Yousefi.

Reza also generated his own designs of mathematical tilings and tessellations, advancing this field by drawing upon his Persian heritage and addressing both theoretical and practical aspects of applied geometry.

We will miss his exceptional generosity and insight, passionate energy, and dedicated commitment to exploring many forms of Persian cultural expression.