

The Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC)  
announces a Lecture  
by  
**Dr. Ilse Sturkenboom**  
**St. Andrews University**

## **The Dīvān of Sultan Aḥmad Jalā'ir (d. 1410) and the Re-Appreciation of Chinese Style Design in Persian Manuscripts**

Other Sultans alike, the Jalayirid Sultan Aḥmad Jalā'ir was a learned poet whose collective poems (Persian: dīvān) have been preserved in manuscript copies. A splendid copy of his dīvān is now among the holdings of the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington DC. Although the manuscript is not originally dated, its colourful rubrics express the wish that God may make Aḥmad Jalā'ir's sultanate and sovereignty eternal and thus indicate that the manuscript was produced during Sultan Aḥmad Jalā'ir's rule, which comprises his reign over Baghdad and Tabriz between 1382 and 1410.

Eight pages of this manuscript hold depictions of people and animals that are regularly positioned in landscapes. The paintings are remarkable because they distinctly differ from figurative book illustrations from the same region and period: They do not appear to visualise the text written on the same page; Instead of being placed into the written text area – as illustrations typically would –, the paintings occupy the brought margins around the text; Lastly, in contrast to illustrations' strong colours, the dīvān's paintings are executed in expressive black lines combined with touches of washed colours and gold.

This lecture seeks to explain the outstanding characteristics of the Washington copy of the dīvān of Sultan Aḥmad Jalā'ir. Rather than as narrative illustrations – such as they were read in the past –, the paintings will be interpreted as non-illustrative designs that adhere to new aesthetics. The dīvān paintings' techniques and motifs will be compared to designs gathered in 15th century Persian albums, and the marginal position of these designs will be related to decorative borders circumscribing the written text area in Persian manuscripts of the early 15th century. Origins of new painting techniques, different motifs, and an altered mise-en-page will in the end be brought into contact with the import of painted Chinese paper and with processes of adaption and (re-) appreciation it engendered in Persianate realms.

**Thursday, 15 December 2016 at 6 pm**  
**Room 0001, CSMC**