

A PRINCE AND PRINCESS FEASTING  
ON A TERRACE, FROM HAFIZ, DIVAN,  
BEFORE 1717. BODLEIAN LIBRARY,  
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



## Manuscripts with a universal story

It is the largest exhibition of Persian manuscripts in Australia's history and it's at the State Library of Victoria until July 1.

The State Library of Victoria's 2012 exhibition *Love and devotion: from Persia and beyond* celebrates the beauty of Persian manuscripts and the stories of human and divine love told through their pages from the early 11th century on. Transcending time and place, these stories continue to resonate today and to be retold through contemporary literature and popular culture.

*Love and devotion* showcases a rich selection of manuscripts from the world-renowned collection of the Bodleian Libraries of the University of Oxford, along with rare works from the State Library of Victoria and other Australian collections.

The Bodleian Library's founding in 1602 coincided with a time of increasing interest in the East, and its holdings later increased through the acquisition of works once owned by renowned scholar-collectors such as Archbishop Laud, Francis Douce, JB Elliott, Sir William Ouseley, and Sir Gore Ouseley. The foresight and generosity of such collectors and institutions

have enabled the preservation of these works for future generations.

The exquisite works provide viewers with examples of Persian calligraphy, illumination and miniature painting from the 13th to 18th

centuries, one of the richest periods in the history of the book. Many stories from this period were embraced not only in the princely courts but in all sectors of society, told and retold within families and at community gatherings.

The exhibition is supported with a rich collection of resources and information on a dedicated website at [www.love-and-devotion.com](http://www.love-and-devotion.com), including multimedia resources such as actor Helen Morse introducing romantic stories and lyrical verse written and inspired by the great Persian poets, co-curator of the exhibition Susan Scollay speaking on Persian poetry, and Richard Ovenden on the Bodleian Libraries and the Love and Devotion exhibition.

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