



Clockwise from top left: *Two Books*, 2010; *The Holy Scroll*, 2014; detail of *Garland of Origami Cranes*, 2011; *The Holy Book*, 2014

What is it about origami that helps promote co-operation? “Origami is from Japanese culture, which is neither Israeli nor Palestinian,” Golan explains. “It is culturally neutral. Also it doesn’t require any special talent, it’s calming, fun and relatively inexpensive.” The teachers use English, Hebrew and Arabic and the children learn to greet each other in those languages. At the end of the course there is a show of the children’s work and a party for the participants and their families.

Golan was inspired to set up the initiative by memories of her own childhood in Jerusalem, where the Jewish and Palestinian communities would mix freely. Now, she says, the children of the two sides never meet. “Origami works as a powerful tool of reconciliation. By bringing

the children together in an atmosphere of fun and co-operative creativity, we break the cycle of mistrust.” Students learn to fold many different origami forms together, but their garlands of origami cranes, world-wide symbols of peace, are among the most powerful and moving.

For the last few years Golan has been creating her own works focused on the theme of the book as a symbol of religious belief. In *Two Books* (2012), figures of people emerge from the pages of the two sacred books, the *Torah* and the *Koran*, and reach out to each other and mingle. The work, which is currently touring the United States in the exhibition *Folding Paper: The Infinite Possibilities of Origami* represents her hope that people with different belief systems can come together, still tied to their own

‘book’, but free to move and mix.

Her most recent art, *The Holy Scroll* and *The Holy Book* (see above), continues the book metaphor, with delicate accordion-like folds that stretch and manipulate the paper. “Even though the texts [the *Koran* and the *Torah*] are singular and definitive, they are open to many interpretations that roll and twist the meaning.” In another work, *Two Holy Books*, “the cutting and folding of the pages separates the paper into two equal parts that create two holy books, separated yet connected.” Yet, she is not particularly religious herself. “I don’t see myself as a Jewish artist but simply as an artist,” she says.

Golan’s work might be paper thin, but its message is thick with possibilities. ■

Folding Paper: The Infinite Possibilities of Origami, and Above the Fold: New Expressions in Origami is currently touring cities across the USA. See www.artsandartists.org. For more on Folding Together see www.foldingtogether.org