Fowler
MUSEUM AT UCLA

For media inquiries, please contact:
Nathalia Morales-Evanks
Director, Communications & Marketing
+1 310-825-4288
nmorales@arts.ucla.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fowler Museum at UCLA Announces the Establishment of the Mary Jane Leland Textile Fund

Photo by Julius Schulman

LOS ANGELES, CA — October 22, 2025 — The Fowler Museum at UCLA is honored to announce the establishment of the Mary Jane Leland Textile Fund, a $1.71 million endowment made possible through a generous bequest from the estate of artist, educator, and textile scholar Mary Jane Leland (1923–2022). The endowment will provide ongoing support for textile-related projects and acquisitions at the Fowler Museum, ensuring continued scholarship and public engagement with the museum's renowned textile collections.

Leland's gift reflects her lifelong dedication to advancing the field of fiber arts and textile studies. Trained at the Cranbrook Academy of Art, and settling in Los Angeles in 1951 to work first for the legendary American Crayon Company, Leland became a pioneering figure in modern textile education. After leading the textiles program at Los Angeles City College, she subsequently founded the Textile and Fiber Arts program at California State University, Long Beach, where she taught for over thirty years. Her own artistic practice, which included block-printed textiles such as *Aura Pods* (1959), held in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's collection, was deeply rooted in modernist design principles and the Bauhaus tradition.

Beyond her artistic and academic accomplishments, Leland was known for her rigor, mentorship, and vision. Former students and artists including Gerhardt Knodel, Jim Bassler and Clare Graham have credited her as a profound influence, recalling her as a teacher of remarkable discipline and creativity.

Beginning this academic year, the *Mary Jane Leland Textile Fund* will support textile projects–including research, conservation, exhibitions, publications, and public programs—as well as acquisitions.

“Mary Jane’s generosity ensures that the Fowler will continue to explore and share the extraordinary diversity and history of global textile traditions,” said Silvia Forni, Shirley and Ralph Shapiro Director of the Fowler Museum at UCLA. “Her legacy as an educator and artist will inspire future generations through the projects this endowment makes possible.”

Roy Hamilton, former Senior Curator of Asian & Pacific Collections at the Fowler Museum and trustee for Leland’s estate said, “Mary Jane travelled the world first through her work with the American Craft Council. Everywhere she went, she further developed her keen appreciation for the finest skills and techniques in textiles produced by indigenous artists. The many wonderful textiles she donated over the years to the Fowler Museum always had some special, subtle beauty or demonstrated some underappreciated technique. Additionally, she was a very generous supporter with her time and expertise.”

Mary Jane Leland passed away in Los Angeles on October 2022 at the age of 99. Through her transformative bequest, the Fowler Museum will continue to honor her lifelong commitment to artistic innovation, education, and the preservation of textile arts.

About The Fowler Museum:

The Fowler Museum at UCLA explores global arts and cultures with an emphasis on Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Indigenous Americas—past and present. The museum enhances understanding of world cultures through dynamic exhibitions, publications, and public programs informed by interdisciplinary approaches and the perspectives of the cultures represented. The work of international contemporary artists is presented within complex frameworks of politics, culture, and social action. The Fowler Museum is one of three public arts institutions of the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture.

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