Robert C. Hillestad, Professor of Textiles, Clothing and Design, College of Home Economics, University of Nebraska, was named the 1988 College of Home Economics Outstanding Scholar. He has been a member of numerous professional organizations and has received national and regional awards for his visual arts and exhibitions. Several of his works are displayed in private and corporate collections across the country. He has taken the fiber art form far beyond the meaning generally associated with the craft by his ingenuity of expression and is considered by his peers as a major leader in creative activities within the textiles and clothing field.

In addition to participating in numerous ITAA juried gallery exhibitions and runway shows through the years, he was honored by the Association as recipient of The Distinguished Scholar Lecture Award in 1992 and the QST Commemorative Lecture Award in 1996. Distinguished Lifetime Achievement awards have been given by ITAA in his honor to Marilyn DeLong, JoAnn Stabb, and Nancy Bryant. The ITAA Robert Hillestad Endowment Fund supports doctoral study.

Upon his retirement from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1996, he was awarded the rank of Professor Emeritus. The Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery on the UNL East Campus, Lincoln, was named in his honor in 1997. He was formally recognized for his contributions to the arts in the State of Nebraska by the Mayor of Lincoln in 1996 and the Governor in 2008. The Costume Society of America designated him as a Fellow in 2014. He is the author of Robert Hillestad: A Textiles Journey. He resides in Lincoln, Nebraska where he works professionally as a studio textiles designer creating one-of-kind garments, accessories, and fine art for commercial and residential interiors.