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Robert Hillestad, Professor and Fiber Artist

Marilyn DeLong
University of Minnesota

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Robert Hillestad

Professor and Fiber Artist

Dr. Hillestad has been a member of the Costume Society of America since 1978 and has participated in many annual Symposia. Dr. Hillestad has multi-faceted abilities—he is a superb design educator as well as an active fiber and apparel artist—and he integrates the two roles of educator and artist expressively, superbly, and elegantly.

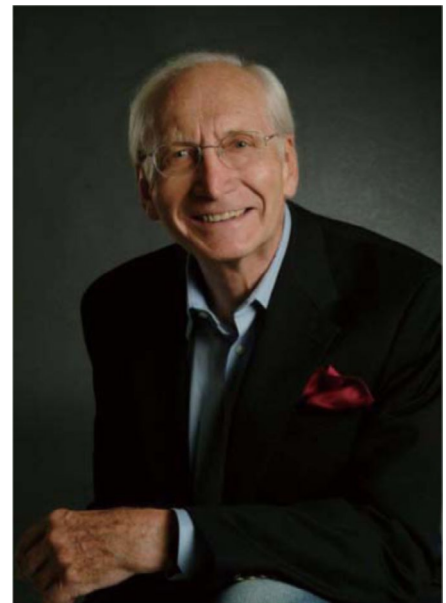
Dr. Hillestad is professor emeritus at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. In 1997, *The Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery* on the Lincoln Campus of the University of Nebraska was named in his honor upon recommendation of the faculty in the Department of Textiles, Clothing and Design and the University of Nebraska Foundation. He founded the *Friends of the Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery* and pursues an active relationship with this Gallery—continually working on fundraising and helping with numerous projects.

As a design educator, Dr. Hillestad works collaboratively with civic groups and educational institutions throughout the United States on a wide range of projects to increase awareness of costume and textiles as media of artistic expression. He gives lectures, conducts workshops, curates exhibits, serves as a juror and consultant, and exhibits his work as fine art. As a design educator, he gives his time and expertise freely. For example, he agreed to serve as a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota and teach a short course and workshop about design, as well as guest curate an exhibition and furnish exhibition pieces. The result was an extremely popular project with both undergraduate and grad-

uate students and the public. In addition to being a visiting professor at the University of Minnesota, he has served similarly as a visiting professor in such universities as North Dakota State University, the Ohio State University, Florida State University, and Colorado State University. Students are an integral part of his studio, and, as a gentle and always willing mentor, Dr. Hillestad often can be found working with students on a design project.

As a fiber and apparel studio artist, Dr. Hillestad creates distinctive one-of-a-kind garments, accessories, and fine art for residential and commercial interiors, and has exhibited his designs worldwide. His imaginative and original creations have been shown in more than 150 juried and invitational exhibitions and stage presentations throughout the United States and abroad. His artwork is included in numerous corporate, private and museum collections including: the Sheldon Gallery, Lincoln, Nebraska; the Museum of Nebraska Art, Kearney, Nebraska; the Goldstein Gallery of the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota; the Kwangju City Folk Museum, Kwangju, Korea; and the Central Museum of Textiles, Lodz, Poland.

In addition to his active career as a fiber and apparel artist, Dr. Hillestad is also a leader in scholarship. He helped to nurture the concept that apparel design was a valid form of scholarship and equal to other forms of art. He is a true believer in costume studies and found a way to balance his own creative endeavors as a fiber artist with the demands of academia. He is the author of



numerous scholarly and popular articles on topics pertaining to textiles, fashion, and appearance as non-verbal communication including “The Structure of Appearance,” published in *Dress*, Volume 5, 1980. He is the author of *Robert Hillestad: A Textiles Journey*, published in 2008. Images of his artwork have appeared in more than sixty publications in print and electronic form, including: *Surface Design Journal*, *American Craft*, *Ornament*, *Fiber Arts Design Book Two and Three*, *Textiles: The Art of Mankind*, and several text books and videos including *The Picture Show*, narrated by the late Vincent Price.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Dr. Hillestad has received awards almost too numerous to mention. They include at the University of Nebraska the “Chaikan Sorensen Distinguished Teaching in the

Humanities Award" (1984); Department of Theatre Arts & Dance "Special Service Award" (1987); "Burlington Northern Foundation Award" (1989); "College of Human Resources and Family Sciences Outstanding Scholar Award" (1978, 1996). Other awards include: the "Salute to Young Professionals Award" (1976), "Leader of the Year Award" from the Nebraska Home Economics Association (1990) and the American Home Economics Association (1992); and the "Distinguished Alumni Award" from the College of

Human Ecology at The Ohio State University (1998).

Dr. Hillestad has been honored by the International Textile and Apparel Association, including the "ITAA Fellow" award (1989); "Distinguished Scholar Award" (1992), and "QST Commemorative Lecture Award" (1996). Within ITAA, he established the "Distinguished Lifetime Achievement Awards for Excellence in Design and Aesthetics" which has been awarded to three recipients in his name.

Dr. Hillestad is a true supporter of the arts in Lincoln and throughout Nebraska as well as one of the state's best-known artists. He has been awarded Lincoln, Nebraska's "Mayor's Arts Award" (1996); and the Nebraska "Governor's Arts Award" (2008).

Submitted by nominator:
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