

December 12, 2019

**Dr. Rolf Achilles, Independent Art Historian
FORM SHIFTERS, ONE PURPOSE: BUILT FOR
WORSHIP**

Rolf Achilles, instructor of the History of American Interior Design in the Historic Preservation graduate program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, was born in Germany but relocated to Brazil with his family as a young child. The family relocated to DeKalb, IL when Achilles reached school age. He studied philosophy, history, German literature, and economics at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, then decided to go to Europe to pursue his academic interests and was accepted to the university in Frankfurt am Main.

Achilles continued traveling throughout Europe, enrolling in university courses that pertained to his growing interest in art history, classical archaeology and historic architecture over the next several years. Achilles funded much of this travel by writing or magazines and architecture publications, and by photography projects; for instance, Swiss archives engaged him to photograph sacred interiors in the Netherlands and several Swiss Medieval and Baroque interiors.

Returning to the Chicago area, Achilles earned a Master's degree from Northern Illinois University and a Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Chicago. He later worked at the University's Smart Museum.

Achilles has been working independently since 1983, and is firmly rooted in the city's art and academic worlds, in addition to his contributions to the field of historic preservation. He has been teaching at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago since 1994, first in the Art History department, and now in the Historic Preservation graduate program. He teaches the program's class on historic interiors. He has written several books, including histories of the Chicago Public Library and the Newberry Library. He currently sits on the boards of the Richard H. Driehaus Museum and the Glessner House Museum, among other nonprofit cultural organizations.

