

---

An equally persuasive and textured portrait of Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) is drawn in the second half of this volume. The author has sure command of the world of modernist art over which Stieglitz ruled in America during the decade before and the decade after World War I. In addition, Abrahams, a historian of wide-ranging talents, manages to read Stieglitz's own photographs as texts illuminating the mind of this great artist and social critic. In his own work, as in that of the artists he exhibited, Stieglitz sought to establish photography as a new medium of self-expression. As the owner of the famous Manhattan gallery, "291," and as editor of *Camera Work*, perhaps the finest photography journal ever published, Stieglitz introduced Americans to the most advanced art of the day.

As representative figures of the "lyrical left," Bourne and Stieglitz emerge as spokesmen of the "inviolable autonomy of the self" in an age of ever-increasing political and social conformity. Through them, the author reminds his readers that, among other things, there were intellectuals in New York before there were "New York intellectuals." And also that there has existed in New York a tradition of intellectual radicalism that has never been trimmed to suit the requirements of mere ideology.

—Carl Resek '86

---

## NEW TITLES

---

### *History*

**THE FOREIGN POLICY  
OF SAUDI ARABIA:  
The Formative Years,  
1902–1918**  
by Jacob Goldberg  
Harvard, 1986  
231 pp. \$22.50

Saudi Arabia moves in ways strange to most Middle Eastern nations. Wary of "fraternal" Arab alliances, comfortable in their dealings with Western states, the Saudis appear remarkably free of ideological fervor. Goldberg, a professor at Tel Aviv University, traces the nation's pragmatic foreign policy to the rise of the third Saudi dynasty during the first two decades of the 20th century.

In 1902, when Ibn Saud (1880?–1953), heir to the Saudi throne, returned from exile and drove the rival Rashidi dynasty from Riyadh, observers (particularly the Ottoman overlords) expected a revival of Wahhabism. A fundamentalist brand of

Islam dedicated to converting all nonbelievers, Wahhabism spurred 18th- and 19th-century Saudi rulers to wage war against their neighbors. But each time the Saudis grew too menacing, the powerful Turks stepped in and crushed them.

Ibn Saud, worldly wise as a result of his years in British-dominated Kuwait, tempered ambition with a strong dose of realpolitik. He courted Britain's favor and protection in his quiet struggle against Ottoman hegemony. At the same time, he openly pledged fealty to the sultan and refused to fight against the Turks during World War I. His policy succeeded: Unlike other Arab lands once under Ottoman suzerainty, Saudi territory was never made into a European mandate.

Saud's deft diplomatic gamesmanship continued throughout the 1920s, as he vied with the rival Hashemites to secure favorable territorial boundaries for what came to be recognized, in 1932, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Despite occasional outbursts of Wahhabi fervor (e.g., the 1979 takeover of the Grand Mosque of Mecca), Saudi policy continues to reflect "not the interests of Islam . . . but the interests of the Saudi dynasty."

**HOME: A Short History of an Idea**  
by Witold Rybczynski  
Viking, 1986  
256 pp. \$16.95



Rybczynski's illuminating history of Western notions of home focuses on an aspect of the human dwelling that most contemporary architects seem to have forgotten: comfort.

Timeless as that quality might seem, the author, a professor of architecture at McGill University, ties its emergence to the rise of the European bourgeoisie during the late Middle Ages. To be sure, from the 11th century until the 17th, concern for comfort even among city dwellers was slight: Houses served both as shops and homes, with few distinct boundaries; privacy was minimal, and furnishings (as the French words *meubles* and *mobilier* suggest) were moveable and functional.

But even if the English word "comfort" had no domestic applications until the 18th century, Rybczynski sees the turning point in the 17th century, when the Dutch virtually invented domesticity. As paintings by Vermeer and others attest, Holland's clean, orderly dwellings, clearly separated from the workaday world, were objects of intense personal pride, arranged and overseen by