PERSONAL ESSAY

How to curate the perfect 'Yinsta'

// BY RIYA NADKARNI

There are a few rites of passage in becoming a Yale woman. The transition to the leather tote, the turtleneck and the casual boot. But there's a greater phenomenon that occurs in a girl's first semester at Yale. Somewhere between your FOOT trip and Halloweekend, you realize that your niche hometown Insta has transformed into the it-girl Yinsta.

Is it a deliberate movement? What would your Psych 101 professor say about the conformality of the Yinsta — actually who cares? A much more reliable source, Fizz, tells us: "All 'hot girls' here post the same." So, for those of you in this transitional period of your lives, here are some tips on curating your Caroline Bessette-chic but still Ibiza-loving Yinsta — after all, you're old money but still know how to have fun:

1) Never look at the camera: You wouldn't want anyone to think you posed for this photo, right? No, you just coincidentally had your cute Spring Fling outfit and a niche borg name on display because that is your natural state. Look off to the side, at your friends, or even at your borg — but never, ever at the camera.

2) Curating a low-key party post: An overhead photo at a frat, candid fit check — yes, girl, you have the most unique black skirt and going-out top combo. Your friend's on an elevated surface — you can't take that girl anywhere! Story post of the pregame with the caption "we're so back" — bonus points if you discovered the story song through your situationship.

3) Mandatory world — Western Europe — tour: Country-hopping is no big deal for you, so make sure to not seem bug-eyed. Laundry hanging to dry on a balcony in Venice, a cappuccino in Paris, martinis in Barcelona and maybe a blurry shot at the club in Berlin if you're feeling risque.

4) The studious feature: You're not just a party girl. You're an intellectual. And the best way to tell? Post a picture looking out from your resco library window. Add a performative picture of your laptop open on Beinecke. Stop by Atticus to get a coffee and book photo before continuing your three-hour TikTok scroll — this time with caffeine. You can't forget the cute outfit in the YUAG — again, be sure to not look at the camera. You don't want people to think that you're not totally absorbed in the Monet...

5) By the way, I go to Yale: As said by my friend the first week of first year, "Make sure to get the Yale logo on your sweatshirt in that ice cream pic." And yeah, the payoff for the academic stress is the aesthetic campus that takes over your Yinsta. Make sure to post at least eight stories of Cross Campus with different angles at first snow. In fall, add an outdoorsy East Rock pic. That is probably the only time that you will use your one pair of Patagonia baggies on campus.

6) Finsta: The Yale It Girl has been unleashed! Copy everything I've already told you, but this time throw in a couple cigs.

As the saying goes, "If a tree falls in a forest and nobody's around to hear it, does it make a sound?" Obviously not! Because if it's not on Instagram, are you even casual, chic and intellectual?

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ILLUSTRATION BY SERINA YAN

PERSONAL ESSAY

WiFi off, third spaces on

// BY ESMERALDA VASQUEZ-FERNANDEZ

Weaving through crowds became a part of my daily routine this summer.

I spent two months abroad in Barcelona in an apartment with a view of the Sagrada Familia. I landed in the city a few days before my program started, and before any relationships could form, I got to explore it on my own. On my first night, I ventured from my hotel to the nearest Burger King to get the best vegan chicken nuggets that they inconveniently do not sell in the United States. I brought the brown bag to the Gothic Quarter and ate on some steps as I watched people sip glasses of Sangria around metal wickered tables, chatting for what looked like hours.

A month into the program, my roommates and I became those people. Every night, we found a third space to spend hours in. Dinner wasn't an obligatory rushed meal, but three hours of organic conversation. The city felt made up of third spaces — a place separate from one's home, work or academic life. From beaches to parks to farmer's markets and, my favorite, ample benches to sit on, there was a sense of community everywhere.

When Jasmine, my best friend from Yale, visited me, we spent hours on a bench debriefing, sketching and reading. Europe rewarded the art of aimless people watching and sitting without imminent plans. Her time in Barcelona healed something deep within me.

In California, I found third spaces in community gatherings, coffee shops, dog parks and a music club called Sound Waves. Every Tuesday, I brought notes about Sound Waves' assigned album and listened to people of all ages discuss it. Fleetwood Mac, The Velvet Underground & Nico, David Bowie, Aretha Franklin and Lesley Gore became familiar, and so did the strangers. Sound Waves became an integral third space in my routine. But summer ended and I found myself back in New Haven. Suddenly, the comfort of endlessly scrolling through TikTok videos, rewatching episodes of "The Vampire Diaries" and listening to records on my own replaced the warmth of the in-person community I had found.

Text chains from my study abroad roommates are filled with nostalgia. I can't send another "I miss you" text without wanting to relive the two months through a shared photo album. My phone is like a morgue for old memories capturing all the places and social spaces I've been lucky to experience. Hour-long FaceTime calls to my friends from California do not eliminate the loneliness. Yes, personal time is healthy, but to equate virtual connection with in-person interaction can leave space for dissatisfaction. Calls and replying back to various group chats all end when I turn off my phone. Online bubbles pop, and I look up to see that I am still alone in my room.

Third spaces around campus can feel hard to come by because many gatherings and hangouts are work oriented.

But that doesn't mean there are no available third spaces to enjoy. Cross Campus is the closest space that captures the feeling of belonging within a community because it resembles what I love so much about Barcelona: strangers interact, people largely spend time outside and hangouts last hours. Barcelona carves out time for community. Similarly, on Cross Campus, people blow bubbles, play music, take pictures, talk for hours and embrace the sun. Additionally, the Good Life Center is an amazing place to read, play instruments in the music room and even take a siesta in the nap room. Yoga classes at the Divinity School allow people to connect over peaceful movement. My personal favorite is grabbing matcha from the Acorn and sitting in the Siliman courtyard with my friends.

When the sun goes down and people are back in their dorms, it is often friendships on-campus that staves off loneliness. My friends' dorms, and my own, become a safe place. Third spaces are important because they remind people that they do not just exist to get good grades and wait for the next academic break. Community should not only exist online. Personally, I don't want to be left with something that only exists when the internet is on.

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ILLUSTRATION BY SEBASTIAN WOODS

WEEKEND RECOMMENDS:

TREND-HOPPING AT THE THRIFT STORE