

WEEKEND 525,600'

'PHOTO ROW' OFFERS A GHOSTLY STROLL DOWN MEMORY LANE

// BY KATHARINE KONIETZKO

Once upon a time last Tuesday, I was in the Davenport College Gallery. I went to see the “19th-Century New Haven: Chapel Street's Photo Row” exhibit, which is a collection of old photographs taken by members of the 30-plus studios that once lined that illustrious thoroughfare. These are the faces of New Haven in the 1870s, now relegated to a life on gallery walls.

Lisa Kereszi ART '00, a lecturer at the School of Art and collector of these so-called “cabinet cards,” has the same passion for these mysterious images as Paula Dean does for butter. At a talk for the opening of the show, she explained the importance behind photographs in those days. Which is to say, in those days, there was no Facebook, and it took considerable effort to make them. In the 1870s, images were indulgent, and getting one's picture taken was a ceremonious affair. Women held their fussy babies for portraits while draping themselves in black cloth to stay unseen; clients often wore wire headrests to help stay still during shoots. Even the deceased were brought in for photos so that at least one image of them would remain after they passed beyond the veil.

Almost all of the photographs are shots of someone's face, tilted gently in one direction with a gaze directed slightly away from the camera. These people are too busy looking peacefully into their own past to bother with us, their sight devoted to a vanished world.

One girl caught my eye because she looked my age, despite her constricting dress and tight bun. Expertly styled curls covered her forehead. So much effort had been put into her appearance, because this photograph might have been one of only a few in her lifetime. Maybe she took it to send back home to California, in a letter that would travel for weeks by locomotive. There I was, looking at her

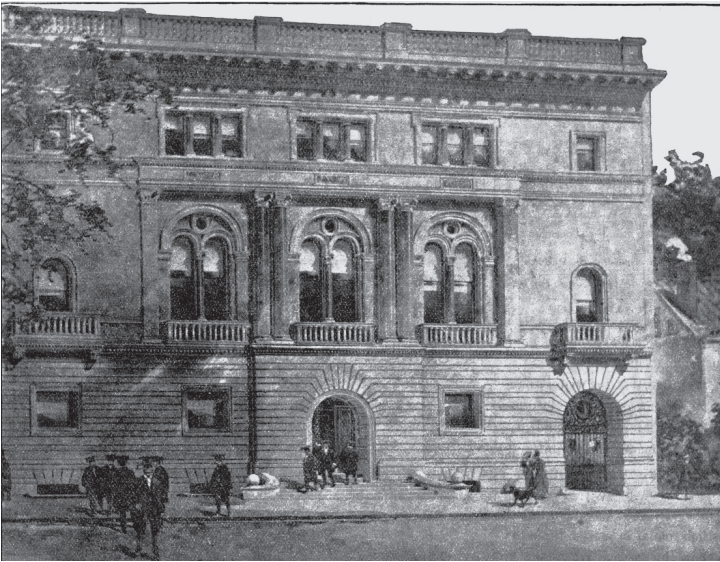
now, in a time when, at any moment, I am seconds away from sending a snapshot of my life to anyone, anywhere.

We are so saturated with photographs these days; it's hard to think of them as rarities or collectibles. Looking at this exhibit made me think about our generation's wildly different relationship to the camera. Many pictures I see on Facebook are of my friends and me screwing up our faces and contorting our bodies. We're desensitized to, even bored with, a stoic face. But would those individuals on the gallery wall act differently than us if they lived now? Parties at Gatsby's house only seem more poetic than parties on Lynwood because they were documented by Fitzgerald's prose instead of a roommate's iPhone. The question is, then, where do we put forth our best image? Is that even necessary anymore, in a world where a picture is barely worth a moment's pose, let alone a thousand words.

Kereszi showed an old newspaper ad that read: “Procrastination is the thief of time.” I procrastinated from my homework by going to this exhibit, but I probably would have been in my room looking at Facebook photos anyway. At least these pictures were well crafted. The exhibit is unassuming and simple in execution, but still worth a stop on the way to a Davenport dinner. And it inspired me to compose myself a bit more for the next picture I'm in, one of thousands that will be taken in my lifetime.

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// YDN
Damn ... all of this old stuff is pretty old, huh?



The education of an Ivy League comedian

// BY NATASHA THONDAVADI

Has the idea of a career for which you don't need an alarm clock ever appealed to you?

The phrase “Yale alumni” conjures images of serious-looking professionals in suits sitting behind unnecessarily large mahogany desks. But what if, despite your Yale education, you don't want to be a doctor or a lawyer or a business executive? Sure, many a graduate has renounced these stereotypical paths and gone on to teach or work for a non-profit. But you're a real creative. You want something different.

Have you considered stand-up comedy?

Shaun Breidbart is one Ivy Leaguer who seems to have found the cure to white collar boredom. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania and working in banking, Breidbart (who goes by Shaun Eli — ironic, he likes to joke, since he didn't go to Yale), left his job three years ago to work as a stand-up comedian full time. He also founded Ivy League Comedy, an endeavor to bring together freelance comedians with Ivy League backgrounds to perform stand-up shows with an emphasis on clean comedy and smart humor.

“A lot of people dream of quitting their day jobs to be entertainers,” Breidbart explained. “Some of them do

it. None of them ever dreams of going back.”

Dan Naturman, Penn grad and occasional Ivy League Comedy performer, had a similar start to his life in the entertainment business. Despite having only limited comedic experience in college, Naturman started going to stand-up shows while attending law school in New York City. Once he had gained experience through bringer shows (open mic comedy nights that allot stage time in exchange for bringing cover-charge-paying friends), Naturman dropped out to pursue a full-time career as a comic.

Having met these comedians in the context of their upper-echelon educations, I had to wonder whether this resume-buffer was helpful or harmful in a world where success was so far removed from a GPA or test score. Is marketing yourself as an Ivy League Comic actually a good idea?

Columbia grad Steve Hofstetter, who has also performed with Ivy League Comedy, seems to think so.

“A comic's job is to criticize the world in a way that'll make people laugh,” Hofstetter said. “Figuring out how to observe the world in that way can be something you learn how to do at school.”

Hofstetter added that one of the factors that differentiates comedy from acting is that comedians are both writers and performers. He explained that while many people are good at telling funny stories, being a professional comedian requires a more diverse skill set.

Breidbart and Naturman agreed that even though it may not be your first instinct to associate good performance with a good education, generating material for a routine is a different story. Both men said that it would have been more difficult getting jobs writing comedy if they had not attended elite schools, and Breidbart added that it's been of use when selling jokes to late-night TV hosts. One of his jokes was on Leno once.

But being a comedian comes with its own challenges. As both Breidbart and Hofstetter explained, serving as your own boss can be a rewarding alternative to a traditional office dynamic, but can also be hard work.

“I'm not just the performer and the writer. I'm also the stage manager, director, contract negotiator and marketing person,” Breidbart continued. “I'd say that comedy is one-third each [of] writing, performing and marketing. And a college degree helps with

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that.”

Breidbart thinks that having a college degree from a prestigious school like Yale or Penn helped specifically with this aspect of the job, since having contacts from school can be useful in landing gigs at corporate and private events.

However, not all of the comedians interviewed felt like the impact of their Ivy League education on their comedy careers was significant. Aside from writing, Naturman said, he didn't think his schooling has really been of help, and Hofstetter admitted that he has occasionally run up against the “false notion that everyone in the Ivy League is some pencil-pushing nerd.”

The sting of a silent audience is enough to dissuade the bravest of performers, nerd or not. And while I-banking may offer the money, for these fearless few, it's all about the funny.

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FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 09	SANCTUARY: A CATHEDRAL CONCERT Marquand Chapel // 8:00 p.m. The Kitka Women's Vocal Ensemble sings Eastern European songs. Who listens to church music on Friday night?	MEN'S SOCCER VS. QUINNIPIAC Reese Stadium // 9:00 p.m. That guy you saw at Toad's, on the field.	ROYCE DA 5'9" Toad's Place // 9:00 p.m. Because this former colleague of Eminem isn't coming to a Master's Tea anytime soon.	TEQUILASO Berkeley North Court H-23 // 10:00 p.m. “Drinks will be served / music will be played / mistakes will be made.”
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