

OUT + ABOUT

CRAFTSWOMAN ON MAIN

CAIT BARNETT

SMART
FOOTWEAR

FIFTEEN

What started as a small-batch shoemaking business hatched into a full-fledged support system for local artists. Alisha Budkie, owner and resident cordwainer at this footwear studio/art store hybrid in OTR, nurtures Cincinnati's creative community one bespoke shoe, one art supply, one workshop at a time.

While earning her industrial design degree at DAAP, Alisha—a longtime runner—fell for footwear. “I did co-ops at New Balance and ADIDAS and loved the functionality and practicality of footwear design, but not the overwhelming influence of the factories in

China and all that,” she says. “I wanted to do my own thing, something simple, made here in the U.S. with really wellmade materials. That craftsmanship side of it is what I really love.”

Thus began Smartfish, named for her sustainable philosophy. “It comes from the rumor that a goldfish has a memory of 3 seconds. They’re not aware of their surroundings, their impact. But we are aware of those things, and we need to be conscious of the decisions we’re making and what we’re buying and how those things are made.” Initially, she only made ballet flats (women’s sizes 6-11, solid \$125, patterned \$135), taking custom Etsy orders and stocking booths at local indie markets. Focusing on a single style allowed Alisha to develop a highly durable, all-natural outsole. After about six months of testing, she found it: A special concoction of latex and sawdust (locally sourced from Losantiville, the design collective up the street). Next, she started stitching boat shoes and loafers (women’s sizes 7-11+, men’s sizes 8-14, solid \$145, patterned \$155), and recently

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHERIE STANZ



introduced lace-ups (women's sizes 7-11, men's sizes 8-14, solid \$185, patterned \$195). Different looks, sure, but the same design inspiration. "All of the styles were developed with a focus on simple, classic, functional, practical design. Good classics that will wear well and can be enjoyed for years." To get your pair, simply place an order and allow about 4-6 weeks (wait time varies).

These aren't your usual materials, either. Because each pair is made to order with the fabric you pick and the laces you want from Alisha's heap of properly sourced new and vintage materials. "I've had some come from right across the street [Atomic Number Ten], and some from Helen Smith Upholstery in Northside, at Helltown Workshop."

Alisha didn't open the brick-and-mortar shop just for her shoes, though. It's really for the city's art students (who get a 20% discount) and working artists. She remembers her DAAP days, how challenging and time-consuming it was to find the supplies she needed for class, ones that would really last. And with the growing number of creative

folk putting down roots in Cincinnati, she saw an even bigger need for a central, sensible resource. "We're finally retaining more and more amazing alums from the Art Academy of Cincinnati and DAAP. People are really bonding with Cincinnati. There needed to be more of a support system for them. The store is as much for community and collaboration as it is for physical supplies." She stocks everything from freshman foundation kits to Field Notes notebooks, botanical paint to 100% natural play clay for kids (and kids at heart).

The end of August marked the shop's one-year anniversary, but Alisha's already looking ahead. Besides planning Second Sunday on Main, hosting monthly showings as part of Final Friday and working with local nonprofits, she just unveiled a calendar of monthly shoemaking workshops. See the full schedule at smarterthanagoldfish.com, and sign up for the upcoming November 3rd workshop by emailing hello@smarterthanagoldfish.com.

JUMP INTO FALL

AT THE KROHN CONSERVATORY



Bring the family for a day of fun at the Krohn Conservatory. We'll have a variety of LOCAL vendors from around town, along with a Farmer's Market for Children, make your own trail mix bar, cooking with fall vegetables, and much more! Each child that attends will receive a FREE mini pie pumpkin and we'll be giving away a FREE reusable bag to the first 500 guests.

**Sunday
October 14th
10am-3pm**

Event is included with price of admission

- **Adults \$3**
- **Seniors \$2**
- **Children \$1**
(4 and under free)



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