Pleasure without Pretense
Eight ways to try something new without feeling phony

I can cut some slack for the ancient Egyptian butchers who wore high heels to avoid stepping on animal carcasses, but never will I ever understand women who wear high heels daily, modern-day high heels, in my opinion, are a form of pedestal masochism.

And yet, occasionally I'll embrace a little hypocrisy and find myself wandering around in my yellow T-strap heels, knowing damn well the night's going to end in pain and a trip to two. But I do it because they make me feel cozy and ladylike, a welcome escape for a girl who wears tees, jeans and sneakers on the reg.

"Pretentious" is a dirty word — we call it an effort to be perceived favorably by our peers by practicing unnatural behavior. Does the fear of seeming hoity-totty mean we should avoid all the finer things in life? Fall in Cincinnati is full of happenings that could be called cavalier, but there's nothing wrong with test-driving the highfalutin life — just because you can. Don't worry if you trip.

1: Bookmaking Workshop at Mercantile Library

Anyone who's ever practiced the craft of writing knows there's some innate piece of our creativity that disappears when we spend hours staring into a pixelated computer screen; that sort of disconnect takes a little bit of the organic out of the process, which makes writing feel less like an art form and more like following a recipe. For those whove got interested in reconnecting with that antiquated craft, the Cincinnati Book Arts Society hosts a Bookmaking Workshop at the Mercantile Library, just bring scissors, a pencil and a ruler to craft your own blank leather-bound pocket notebook and a handy dress-a-dot.

2: Tyler Shields: Controlled Chaos

To own and use a $100,000 crocodile skin Hermes Birkin bag is one thing. To burn it in the name of "art" is quite another.

Those are the sorts of antics Los Angeles-based celeb photographer Tyler Shields and his muse, girlfriend Francesca Eastwood (Ed star and daughter of Clint), are known for, which is precisely what's sparked the media's polar reactions to his fame. Vice magazine calls Shields' pieces "lame art for douchebags," Huffington Post claims he's a "madman, and one of the most cutting-edge artists around." Shields has smeared blood on Hollywood stars and destroyed couture.

Leibovich hails all in the name of art. Love him or hate him, he's the deus of the art world on everyone's calliper-filled lips. Both Tyler Shields and Francesca Eastwood will be present for the exhibit's opening, so if you go, think about wearing that spare pair of Leibovich pumps — you know, the ones that can get dirty. Opening 6-9 p.m. Friday, Oct. 12. Through Oct. 28. Miller Gallery, 2715 E Washington Ave., Hyde Park. 513.842.4406. millergallery.com

3: Bike along the Kentucky Bourbon Trail

The Kentucky Bourbon Trail isn't so much a trail as it is the perpetuation of an experience — that is, becoming acquainted with and appreciative of the Bluegrass State's expansive history and long-standing love affair with the stuff. While a full-bloom tour of the six-stop trail would take hotel stays and at least two days, a bike-friendly route has already been pre-mapped for all you health-conscious, eco-friendly modernists. The mapped three-stop loop covers a 50-mile bike trip, which hits Woodford Reserve, Wild Turkey and Four Rose distilleries. Routes are rural and hilly, so keep that in mind before you get too weird at the first distillery. Woodford Reserve Distillery. 7835 McCreary Pike, Versailles, Ky. 859.680.3441.

4: Asanas and Ale

Yoga? Good. Beer? Great. Yoga and beer? Bellyache? Sounds like an ill combination — but get it, yoga and beer are both rituals humans use to relax. Trappist monks have been brewing beer for centuries, and pleasure-seeking yogis might have just found the perfect combination in uniting the two. The scara yoga piece is identified as the mastery of sutting still (doesn't sound too bad) and cell 解放 doesn't start until after the yoga sash is over — so don't worry about any overlap messing with your qi. $15. 6:30 p.m. Sept. 21. You De Yoga. 7128 Beaumont Ave., Anderson Township. 513.258-2020. youdoyoga.com

5: Farm to Fork: A Celebration of Women Farmers

Face it: Independence farming is kind of a dying biz right now, and it's certainly not a guaranteed lucrative one. Even so, in the food world there's nothing trendier right now than having a soulful,
emotional connection to your food and the people who harvest it, in spirit of honoring that connection, hippie haven/commune Grassville holds ‘Farm to Fork: A Celebration of Women Farmers’ in conjunction with Edible Ohio Valley magazine to celebrate female farmers, who are apparently the largest growing demographic in the farming industry. A locally sourced meal including Grassville-grown produce will be prepared by two area chefs, preceded by a farm tour, hay ride and an outdoor reception where foods can network: $35; $25 for farmers. Reservations required. 5 p.m. Sunday Sept. 23. Grassville, 932 O’Fallonville Road, Loveland. 513-683-2340, grassville.org.

6: Master sommelier wine pairing dinner at Local 127

Becoming a master sommelier isn’t like earning your B.A.; it’s not even like taking the LSATs and getting accepted into a prestigious law school — since 1977, only 197 wine connoisseurs have successfully undergone the rigorous training to achieve that accolade. Local 127 executive chef Steven Geddes is the only master sommelier in the world to also hold the title of working chef, which speaks to his dedication to achieving the sublime with a dining experience in which nothing is an afterthought. Enjoy a four-course, locally sourced meal with a wine pairing hand-selected by Geddes; you can’t experience this just anywhere. $65. 6-10 p.m. Local 127, 413 Vine St., Over-the-Rhine. 513-721-1346, mylocal127.com.

7: Stratus Helicopters’ aerial city tours

Cincinnati how you’ve never seen it before: from 800 feet above ground level. In addition to its flight training and aerial photography services, Stratus Helicopters offers a series of themed aerial tours for dates, special occasions or just because. You can pick a tour that fits your budget — the three-to-four-minute “City Skyline” tour is just $30 per person, or impress your beau with the “Ultimate Date Night Tour,” which soars alongside sparkling downtown Cincinnati and Eden Park’s Mirror Lake right at sunset. There aren’t many things in life worth $10 per minute; this is probably one of them. Stratus Helicopters, 654 Wlmer Ave., East End. 513-533-4354, stratushelicopters.com.

8: Cincinnati’s Inaugural Diner en Blanc

A secret society of picnickers doesn’t necessarily sound like the kind of elite worth lustling after: Diner en Blanc, rest assured, is not your average checkered-blanket-arts-in-everything sort of picnic. Expanding to Cincinnati for the first time, Diner En Blanc is a long-standing, European-centric ritual — an exclusive, invite-only picnic soiree that takes place at a local landmark, although, in the name of secrecy, the location isn’t announced until the very last minute. An ivory invitation carries quite a few regulations: diners must dress “elegantly” in all white, bring a picnic basket, white tablecloth, regulation-size picnic table and two foldable white chairs. Once invited, attendance is mandatory, despite weather circumstances; an invitee who doesn’t show will be “blacklisted” from future events. Although restrictive, event organizers insist the stipulations create an air of cosmopolitan elegance that must be controlled to become a true “tradition.” Cincinnati is one of only 12 U.S. cities selected this year and no more than 1,000 people will receive an invite, which can only be obtained from an existing member, they call it “friendly co-optation.” Sept. 15. cincinnati.dinerenblanc.info.