

## Travel photographers find a space to sit still

### Central Oregon couple open Cascade Center of Photography

By Jordan Novet / *The Bulletin*

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For decades, Swiss-born travel photographers Christian and Regula Heeb kept bottled up a wish to open a place to hold photography classes and gallery showings.

Last month, after months of preparation, the couple opened just such a place, called the Cascade Center of Photography, a first-floor space in a southwest Bend building. Last year, they said, they drove by the spot while on the way to visit their accountant, and they thought it would be just right for their long-held concept.

The Heebes, 40-somethings who have had a house near Horse Butte southeast of Bend for more than 10 years, both continue to work on independent photography assignments in far-flung locales around the world. But now they are maintaining a destination of their own, which already has been drawing the attention of budding photographers and veterans alike.

"We decided to do more local stuff, you know, besides the international business, to spend a little more time in Central Oregon, instead of always running around," Christian Heeb said.

Later this month, he said, the photography center, complete with a commercial photo studio, should have regular daily business hours. Till then, it will continue to be open by appointment.

The couple admit they are not business people, just photographers, albeit successful and published ones, with more than 100 books to their credit. "We do it by instinct," Christian Heeb said of their way of starting the business.

They're not looking to make a lot of money off the project, as their own photography assignments continue to keep them financially secure. They just want to break even. More importantly, they want to cultivate and maintain a photographic community with their center as a sort of gathering place.

Q: Is the center more focused on travel photographers who make pictures here, or is it focused on photographers who are here and making pictures wherever they choose?

A: Christian Heeb: Yeah. Travel photography is really my thing, which I don't think is, you know, feasible for Central Oregon. This center will be for any type of photography as a focal point in Central Oregon.

It's like a platform for photographers here to showcase their work, to get involved with the workshops, with the studio. Also, for people that don't really make a lot of money and don't have their own studio, they can rent a studio here. Or (if) they don't have a photo gallery, ... they can use the photo gallery. They can do lectures here. It's just a place where any type of photographer basically can do whatever they want to.

Q: What were you doing before you decided to open it up last month?

A: Regula Heeb: Photographers always for the last 20-plus years. That's all we did.

Christian Heeb: Yeah, professional travel photographers.

Q: What inspired you to do it? To me it seems out of nowhere.

A: Regula Heeb: Well, no, it wasn't out of nowhere. We just never had the time to look into it. As you know, you run around, and you do your business where you have the income and are so occupied. I mean we hardly had the time to even think about what we're going to do the next. We had assignments for two years in advance, always. So it's hard to think ahead of two years.

Christian Heeb: I guess through the recession, the prices came down this much in Bend.

Regula Heeb: And everybody was raving, "Well, you have to look out for property now, and now is the time." And last August, we said, OK. We were just on the drive to our CPA, I guess, and he's just down the road, and we saw this and we pulled in — "Oh, that's kind of neat." Because the architecture, it's more — what is the —

Christian Heeb: Contemporary.

Regula Heeb: Yeah, it's more contemporary. We thought, well, this would be something that might work.

Q: You were talking about always wanting to do something like this. What was the vision you had?

A: Christian Heeb: In Switzerland we had a gallery. We were pretty young. My dad had an old house, an 800-year-old house in the city center (in St. Gallen, Switzerland) ... and he basically remodeled the whole thing. ... There was a stairway like five stories high. And the stairway was pretty nice and white and everything. And we figured, well, why don't we just do a gallery there, because it doesn't cost anything. It's there. So I just started a little gallery.

Regula Heeb: The good thing is the stairway is open during business hours. We had our office on one of the floors, so if anyone needed attention, we were right there anyway.

Christian Heeb: And we had the openings there. And once a month we had a huge party. I think we hardly sold anything. Just a few pieces. But once a month we had a good party. It was just great. ... And that's why I had the idea. ... Initially I wanted to have a cafe thing.

Regula Heeb: But there are so many cafes in town.

Christian Heeb: But the thing is also when we start traveling less and spending more time in Bend, it would just be nice to have a place as a community center where we actually like to hang out, or go talk about photography, get together with people, you know, in town. This center gives us something to do and connects us with the larger community.



Rob Kerr / *The Bulletin*

Photographers Regula and Christian Heeb opened the Cascade Center of Photography in southwest Bend last month. The Heebes are professional travel photographers who have published more than 100 books.



### The basics

What: Cascade Center of Photography  
 Where: 390 S.W. Columbia St., Suite 110, Bend  
 Employees: Three  
 Website: <http://www.ccophoto.com>  
 Phone: 541-241-2266

Q: Would you like to see it have a 30-year existence or something like that? Do you imagine that happening?

A: Christian Heeb: I don't know. I don't really have that much hope for the planet. So how could I? (Laughs). Sure, it's fine. ... But I think there are so many issues on the planet (that) looking ahead in 30 years, it's impossible.

Regula Heeb: No, but in that sense, yes, that's what we hope for. I mean, my hope is that once we are not able to travel that much anymore, or don't want to, or don't have to travel that much anymore, we can spend more time here, and, yeah, as he was saying, hang around here, talk to all the people, have a community.

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