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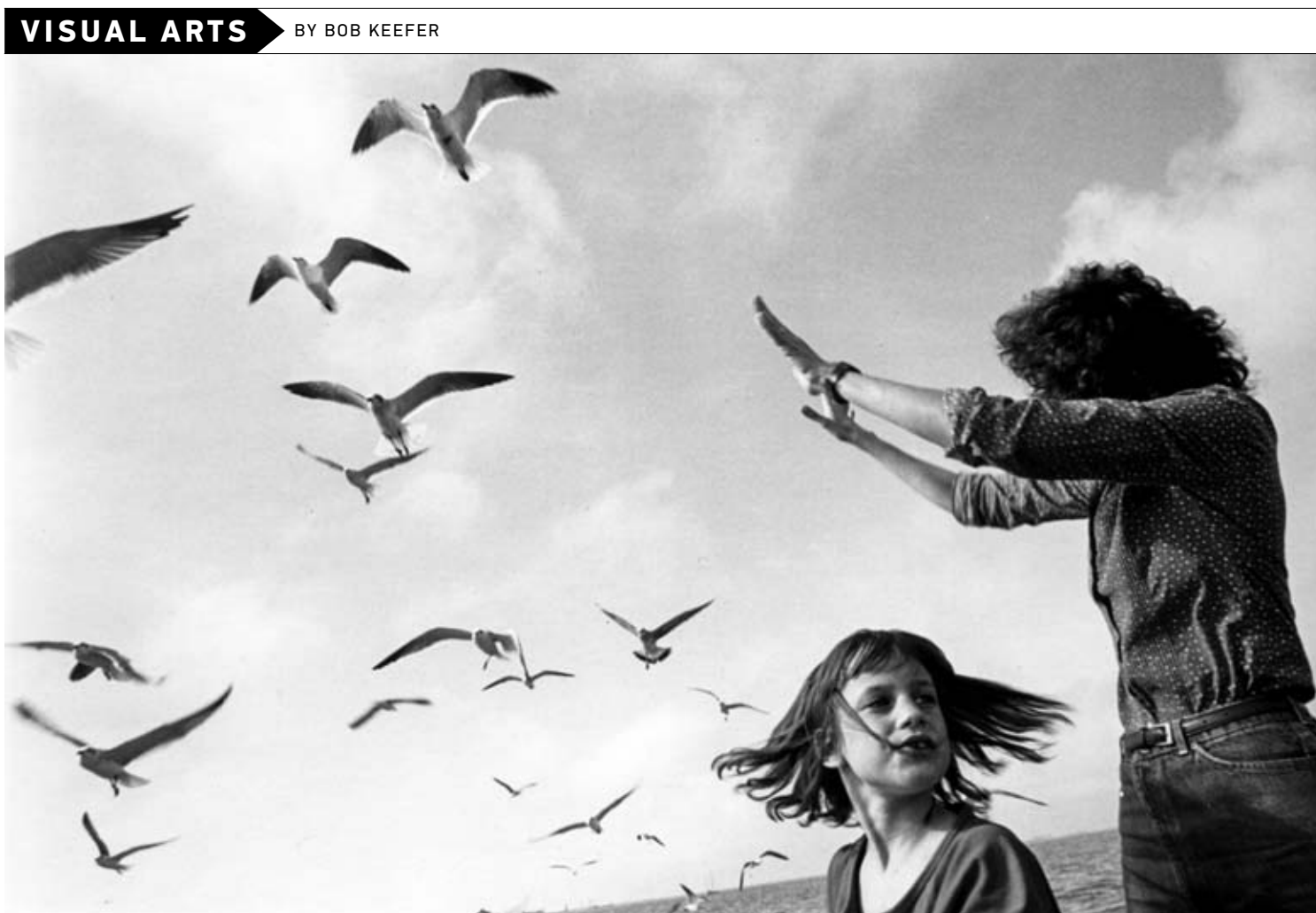
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PHOTOGRAPHER RICK WILLIAMS TAKES A 50-YEAR LOOK BACK

From black-and-white film to iPhone images

The affable Texan Rick Williams has best been known around Eugene over the past decade and a half as dean of the Division of the Arts at Lane Community College, a job from which he retired a year ago.

But Williams, 70, has also been a photographer for the past half century. He worked as a commercial photographer in Austin, Texas, for 30 years and taught photography at the University of Texas there for 10 years. He spent his free time lugging his Nikon cameras to nearby ranches, oil fields and tech factories, where he would document the lives of ordinary people at work.

Emergence: An Arts Journey with Rick Williams, a self-curated retrospective of nearly 50 years of Williams’ work, opens Monday, Feb. 13, and runs through March 9 at the LCC Art Gallery. Williams will give a gallery talk at a 4 pm reception Thursday, Feb. 16.

Williams embraces a black-and-white aesthetic in photography, with clear roots reaching back to Henri Cartier-Bresson, Edward Weston, Walker Evans and Robert Frank. His photos combine strong composition, alluring tonality and a deep empathy with the people who are his subjects, whether they be rodeo cowboys, oilfield roughnecks or tech workers in a cleanroom.

Not surprisingly, most of his work was shot on film. He estimates he has 100,000 black and white negatives, compared to some 15,000 digital images — many of which were shot on his iPhone.

Sorting through all those photos, from commercial images to documentary work to family snapshots, has been an adventure.

“It’s been wonderful,” he says. “It’s my life. A lot of things I shot were with my family when we were on vacation.”

And, yes, there are vacation photos in the show, carefully selected for artistic qualities. “I know which ones have a larger meaning,” he says. “There are no pictures in the exhibit of my son playing soccer.”

Besides his documentary work, Williams has long done more-spontaneous fine art photographs, the kind of images that come from carrying a camera around with you in day-to-day life.

“Typically these images are of people I am interacting with or things I just see, as exemplified by about half of the images in this exhibition,” he says in his artist statement.

“This exhibition is the outcome of a year of editing and 50 years of photographing as I reenter the artistic realm full time,” Williams says. “Hence, the title — *Emergence: An Arts Journey*.”

Williams is the author of *Working Hands*, a book of his photography that was published in 2007. He is co-author with his wife, Julianne Newton, a professor at the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication, of *Visual Communication: Integrating Media, Art and Science*, a textbook published in 2009 on visual and media literacy that won the Marshall McLuhan Award for Outstanding Book in Media Ecology. ■

The Art and Applied Design Department Gallery is in building 11 on LCC main campus, 4000 E. 30th Avenue and open Monday-Thursday 8 am to 5 pm and Fridays 8 am to 4 pm.

