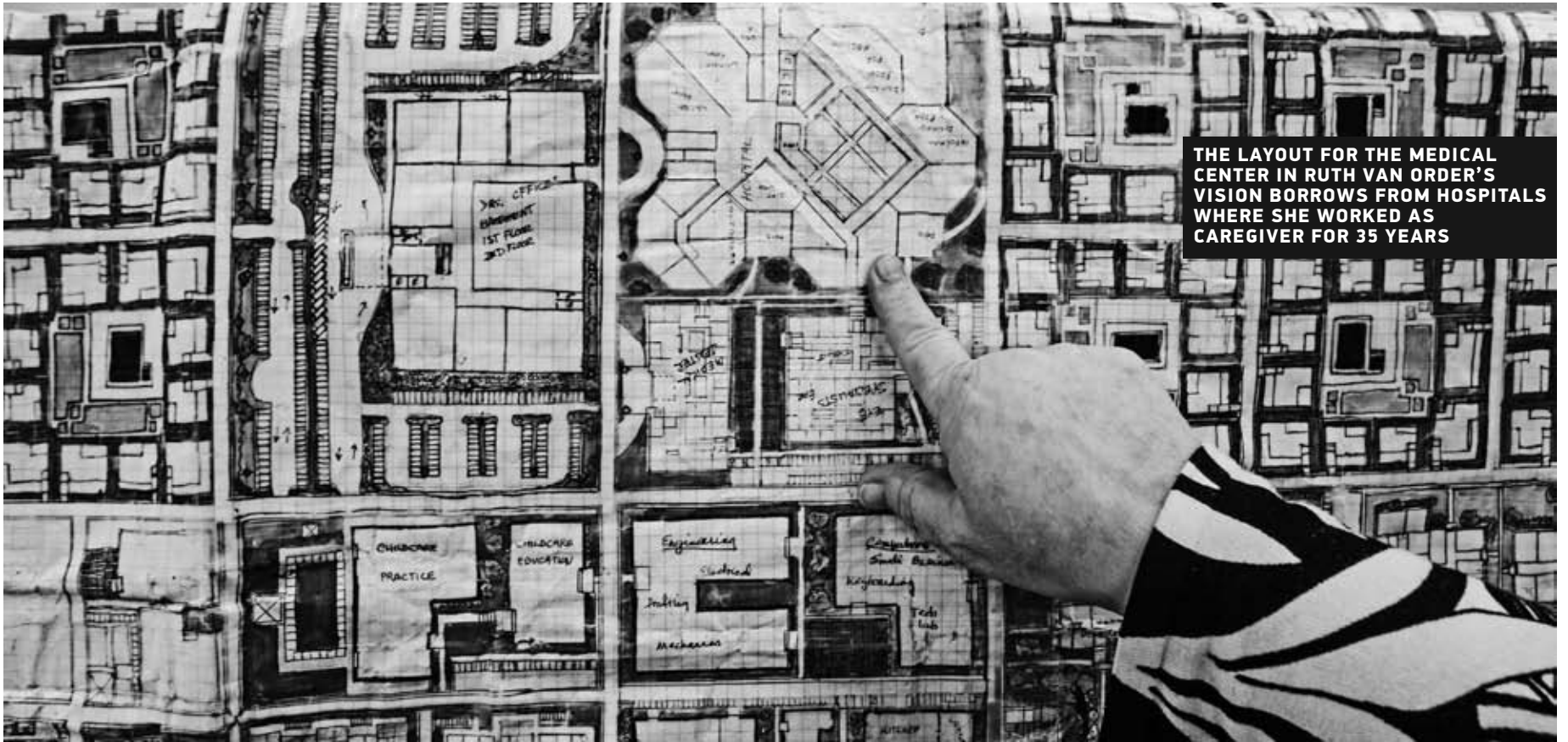




THE LAYOUT FOR THE MEDICAL CENTER IN RUTH VAN ORDER'S VISION BORROWS FROM HOSPITALS WHERE SHE WORKED AS CAREGIVER FOR 35 YEARS

Burris races around his cluttered office like an over-caffeinated bumblebee, juggling dozens of colorful paintings, illustrations, photographs, carvings and sculptures by artists involved in an exhibition titled “We Live Here.”

On display in an office foyer on Benton Plaza’s ground floor, the show collects works of curious vision and astounding talent, made by a small number of self-taught artists and craftspeople who live in the building’s inexpensive upstairs units.

Shortly after moving to Corvallis a few years ago, Burris set up an art program out of the Collaborative Employment Innovation offices in Benton Plaza. CEI is a human services organization that helps people with disabilities find jobs and then assists them in meeting workplace challenges.

Burris’ ArtWorks program does roughly the same thing, but with the purpose of helping clients find opportunities to engage with the art world. “I don’t really like to work, so why would I want to put anyone else in that situation?” Burris asks.

The idea for “We Live Here” began percolating in Burris’ mind after an auspicious conversation months ago at CEI headquarters with artist and writer Patrick Collier.

As Burris and Collier chewed the fat in CEI’s reception area, a series of familiar faces strolled by, one after another, artists each, Benton Plaza denizens all.

That’s so-and-so, Burris said to Collier, he’s a talented photographer who lives in the apartments upstairs. And there’s such-and-such, he’s an incredible writer also living upstairs.

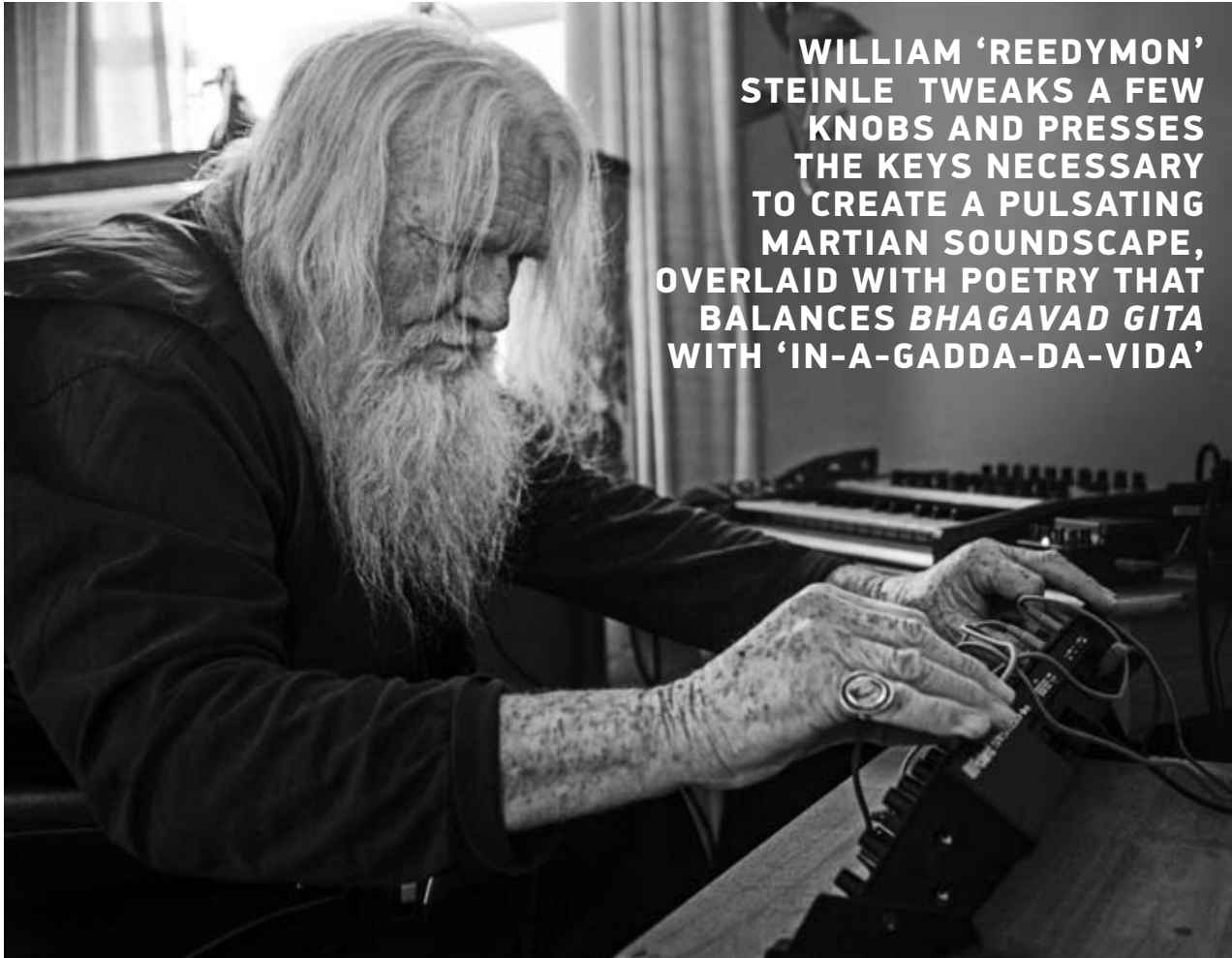
As the list grew, Collier finally interrupted to ask just

how many Benton Plaza artists there are.

Burris consulted with on-site social worker Mary VanderLinden, who has worked with the supporting living program at Benton Plaza for almost four years. She estimated there to be as many as 20 resident artists — more than 30 percent of the building.

“We’re so lucky! That’s the kick: Like, if this is what we can see,” Burris says, gesturing to a painting on one of his office’s art-cluttered tables that depicts a cosmos of blinking stars and swirling nebulae over a sea of blue-black infinity by Benton Plaza resident Victor Nyland, “then what the hell are we missing?”

Out of nowhere one day, Nyland picked up a paintbrush and began the first of what would be a series of four vibrant, hectic outer space vistas. His knack for mechanically precise detail work and replicating meticulous pat-



WILLIAM ‘REEDYMON’ STEINLE TWEAKS A FEW KNOBS AND PRESSES THE KEYS NECESSARY TO CREATE A PULSATING MARTIAN SOUNDScape, OVERLAID WITH POETRY THAT BALANCES *BHAGAVAD GITA* WITH ‘IN-A-GADDA-DA-VIDA’



A SMALL SONGBIRD CARVED FROM WOOD PERCHED ON A STUMP ABOUT TO ATTACK A MCDONALD’S FRENCH FRY CARVED BY WILLIAM STEINLE