The image of the Kabuki figure on the cover was created under the direction of Koji Abe, who is the Antics planning manager at Nippon Univac Information Systems Company, Ltd., in Japan. Nippon Univac has opened eight Antics Studios, under a licensing arrangement with Grove Park Studio Animations, Ltd., in London. Grove Park’s Alan Kitching invented the Antics System, which Univac’s Antics Studios use with a Vax 11/730, 750, or 780 (VMS). The system includes a digitizer, character display, light tester monitor, screen monitor, and a video control subsystem. It has a one-inch VTR output.

Several other Antics Studios have been licensed around the world, including New York, Brussels, and Amsterdam. Nippon Univac’s Antics Studios serve such clients as TV producers, advertising agencies, providers of education, and even users of business presentations.

The Antics System is referred to by Kitching as a true animation system, flexible enough to do nearly anything. It can be used by anybody, says Kitching. An artist can use the system for animation without the services of an animation technician. According to Kitching, Antics teaches the user as it goes. An artist can sit down and start work immediately. “It’s do-it-yourself animation,” quips Kitching.

The images on these pages and on the cover were done to demonstrate the capabilities of the system. The advanced antialiasing technique made these images possible. They appear to be much higher resolution than their true 512 x 512. When Koji Abe considered dumping each image onto a video recorder, the pictures on the monitor were of such high quality that Jinko Gotoh, acting as adviser, suggested that they be shot directly off the monitor screen. They were.

IEEE CG&A is indebted to Gotoh for much of the information about the cover. She interrupted her activities as an independent producer of commercials and computer graphics art to provide answers to a number of questions about the images, the Antics System, and Nippon Univac. Gotoh is currently busy as technical director of the Hitachi pavilion at Expo 85, which will take place in Tsukuba (outside Tokyo) from March 17 to September 18.

The three pictures were chosen to be digitized and enhanced with the Antics System because they included a human image, a landscape, and a still life. These classic Japanese images were created in approximately three hours each.

The originals are from the Edo period (1615 into the 1800’s) in Japanese art, a period marked by a highly repressive form of government, dominated by the shogun. As is so often historically true, the culture of a restrictive period tends to provide an outlet for people’s emotions.

During the Edo (named for the city that is now Tokyo) period, the Kabuki theater flourished. The artist Toshusai Sharaku, who is thought to have been a Noh actor, produced 140 wood-block prints of Kabuki actors. Like the portrait on our cover (reproduced above), they show features contorted by emotion, and bodies in dramatic poses, set against no background whatsoever. Sharaku stopped doing the portraits when he learned that Kabuki actors considered them caricatures and were offended by them. The figures were more highly regarded in Europe than in Japan, because they lack the traditional Japanese subtlety. Today, of course, many people in other countries have seen the Kabuki dancers and witnessed the dramatic expressions visible during climactic moments in their productions.

The Red Fuji is done from an original print by Katsushida Hokusai, who lived from 1760 to 1849. The original hangs in the Tokyo National Museum. Hokusai published a book, Thirty-Six Views of Fuji, which included this picture. While

Figure 1. Kabuki actor.
it does not have the subtle coloring of the earlier printmakers, it shows great strength, and displays some Western influence in its balance of design, with the linear and speckled patterns played against each other. This rather abstract drawing and coloring style was much admired in later nineteenth-century France.

The vase appears to be a more modern picture, but little is known about it. The Antics Studios, however, have benefited from the choice of these three image types from the classical and colorful Japanese Edo period, because they make it possible for Nippon Univac to showcase the advanced antialiasing technique and ease of operation of the Antics System used in its Antics Studios.

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Grove Park Studio Animations, Ltd., can be contacted at 104 Grove Park; London SE5, England SWLE; 44-01-274-5395.

Figure 2. Vase.

Figure 3. The Red Fuji.