In 18 months Digital Art has risen from a gleam in its planners' eyes to a money-making proposition. And yet it is doing 90 percent of its business in an area it didn't anticipate. You never know with success stories—and this one is no exception.

**Volleyball partners**

The original idea was born when Tim Alt began shooting the breeze after a volleyball game at Venice Beach in California. Tim Alt was an artist and Kenneth Weiss was a financial man with considerable computer knowledge. Casually, Alt mentioned that the computer should be a tremendously useful tool for artists, and Weiss agreed. Wouldn't it be marvelous, they mused, to find a little store where you could rent some time on a really good machine and maybe get a little tutoring on the side? So the two started out to find such a place. Outside of the big expensive production houses, they discovered, there weren't any such establishments.

**The venture begins. . .**

If they felt this need, Alt and Weiss reasoned, others must as well. So off they went to borrow against their own savings, as well as from every relative and friend they had, to start just such an enterprise.

**And something else is born!**

Digital Art was born on Wilshire Boulevard in Los Angeles and immediately turned into a place where people come to get artwork done on a computer. As the business evolved, however, some interesting differences from other establishments became evident.

Says Weiss, "People don't generally just give us an order for a design, go away and come back a week later to see several ideas."
Figure 3. This is a logo treatment done at the request of an ad agency.

Figure 4. The computer created the color gradation and Alt created the satellite dishes for an image to go in the ever-growing Digital Art library of unusual shots.

Figure 5. This is a computerized layout to help a client visualize a page from its advertising brochure.

Figure 6. This posterization was created from color photographs for Gotcha Sportswear Company. It was turned into a poster for an in-store promotion.

We actually encourage our clients to work right on the premises with us. We brainstorm together and get immediate feedback from them about what might work, or not, on whether certain colors or lines feel right to the client, and the way he or she sees the company represented.

Alt, too, has come to like this way of working. He particularly likes to work with experienced art directors, showing off the firm’s bag of tricks, from straight digitizing to digitizing with paint-over and additions, or combinations of both. "It is the art directors," he says, "who have a good idea of what they want and can see immediately the advantages of doing it by machine, the possibilities for instant change to try a new idea."

The firm does some package design, but most of its work is for print media. The search for the right machinery was one of the biggest undertakings, and the two men finally settled on the Computer Graphics Lab, which is also used at the New York Institute of Technology. They use a JVC video camera for full input.

Today it is gratifying to both of them to turn around 18 months later and realize that the business is actually turning a profit—a small one for now, and neither of the principals is living high on the hog, but a small living is coming out of the business already. This is a most unusual feat in such a capital-intensive business, and it is happening even as they find they must replace some of their smaller equipment that did not live up to the standards they set.

Several examples of commercial work produced by Tim Alt and Kenneth Weiss appear in Figures 1-6. As you can see, this month’s cover was sheer artistry by Tim Alt. It was not done as a commercial project, and IEEE CG&A feels honored that he has allowed us to print this most beautiful and unusual example of using so little to say so much.