

apexart

Change the Channel: WCVB-TV 1972-1982

Curated by Gary Fogelson
and Michael Hutcherson

January 12 - March 5, 2011

Opening reception: January 12, 6-8 pm

Unsolicited Proposal Program Winner



"We do not regard the audience to be served simply an indiscriminate mass of viewers; nor do we believe that it is necessary to aim at a common denominator and especially the least common denominator."

—Boston Broadcasters Inc., from the FCC hearing

Starting in 1963, Boston Broadcasters Incorporated (BBI), a collective of esteemed academics, local leaders and professionals waged the largest, longest coup in FCC history. Over a period of nine years, BBI fought for and won the license to operate Boston's Channel 5, taking control of the airwaves from the enormously powerful Herald Traveler Corporation. In 1972 the new WCVB Channel 5 went on the air and was operated as any ABC affiliate station would run with the major exception of several programming initiatives encouraged by its board and station manager Bob Bennett.

The point of departure for the exhibition *Change the Channel: WCVB-TV 1972-1982* will be the station's acquisition and the subsequent broadcasting of innovative, locally produced programs and contemporary film for the masses. We aim to illustrate WCVB's assertion that satisfying the public interest does not mean "catering to the lowest common denominator" and that cultural and educational programming could be both stimulating for the audience and profitable for a television station.

This show will take a closer look at Robert Gardner's 'non-commercials', one minute films of members of the community at work inserted as random commercial breaks; Gardner's suggestion of running the Bill of Rights on a 24-hour loop during the US bicentennial; *Psychic Parrot*, a 26 minute animated film by Derek Lamb, and *Cost of Living*, a one-hour documentary about the pursuit of wealth by Richard P. Rogers (both produced by Gardner); and, most importantly, the development of *Screening Room*, a series of 90-minute programs which introduced an audience of 3 million viewers to experimental and documentary filmmakers and animators (such as Hollis Frampton, Les Blank, Peter Hutton, Stan Brakhage and John Whitney).

Multiple projections, text documents, photographs, and other archival material displayed within the gallery space will encourage visitors to consider the impact on WCVB's audience and to ask the question: How might something like this happen again?

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