



TVTV, *Four More Years* (video still), 1972. 1/2 video 61/28.
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

TVTV

Alternative Convention: Top Value Television's Four More Years

Eli Kerr - curator

OPTICA, A Centre for Contemporary Art is pleased to present the exhibition *Alternative Convention: Top Value Television's Four More Years*, organized by Canadian curator **Eli Kerr**. The exhibition focuses on a single video-artifact titled *Four More Years*, produced by the 1970s video collective **Top Value Television (TVTV)**. TVTV was comprised of journalists, activists, artists and members of other video groups, including Raindance Corporation, Videofreex, and Ant Farm. For these young people—the first postwar generation to grow up with television—new tools such as the portable Sony Portapak camera opened up new possibilities for experimentation that also promised political and emancipatory potential.

TVTV was formed in 1972 with the intention of producing alternative television coverage of both the Democratic and Republican party conventions. With press passes and their lightweight camera equipment, TVTV deployed subversive journalistic techniques on the convention floor. By pointing their cameras in the other direction and interviewing the network press about their coverage, TVTV shook-up the establishments of television news and reportage. *Four More Years* would become the first independently produced 1/2-inch video to be broadcasted on national TV: this was a landmark moment in the history of video and journalism as it ushered in an era of DIY video production, birthing the experimental documentary genre known as Guerilla Television.

A half century later, we find ourselves in a future where many of the aspirations of Guerilla Television have been realized. Not only has their style of citizen-journalism created feedback in both entertainment and politics, there is now near-ubiquitous access to video and the means to participate in the production of visual culture. Yet, the legacy of Top Value Television's *Four More Years*, and the Guerilla Television movement more broadly, reminds us that, despite the democratization of access and the empowerment of social media, the power structures that govern the production and circulation of media can at times feel more centralized and opaque than ever.

This exhibition revisits TVTV and their landmark tape *Four More Years* to invite reflection on both the past and the future of decentralized video, political media-making and the politics of making media. It asks: what are the possibilities and conditions for artists and activists looking to effect change on media structures in the present? Is the countercultural strategy of infiltrating the system and changing it from within still conceivable? What happens after the alternative becomes the convention?

Alternative Convention: Top Value Television's Four More Years was first presented in September 2021, at the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery of the University of Toronto, as part of the requirements for an MVS degree in Curatorial Studies. This second installment of the touring exhibition is part of a long-term curatorial research project undertaken by Eli Kerr.

Author: Eli Kerr

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Open on

Thursday, September 8, 2022, 5pm to 9pm

Exhibition

September 8 - October 22, 2022

Tuesday to Saturday, 12pm to 5pm

Reservations is mandatory

for your group exhibition visit through this form:

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or reservations at:

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Active between 1972-1979, video group **Top Value Television (TVTV)** was at the forefront of the alternative documentary movement known as "guerilla television". TVTV was founded by Allen Rucker, Michael Shamburg, Megan Williams, Tom Weinberg and Hudson Marquez. Throughout the 1970s nearly 30 other media makers would take part in TVTV productions. Pioneering Portapak cameras and the new video technology, the group was originally assembled to create alternative coverage of the 1972 Republican and Democratic Presidential conventions in Miami. Following the critical acclaim of their convention tapes, TVTV was organized as a freelance production company that would go on to produce a variety of programs such as *Adland* (1974), *Gerald Ford's America* (1975), *TVTV Goes to the Super Bowl* and *TVTV Looks at the Oscars* (both 1976).

Eli Kerr (b 1988) is the recipient of the 2019 Hnatyshyn Foundation award for Canadian curators under 30, through which he completed a curatorial residency at Fogo Island Arts in 2021. In 2020 he founded Parc Offsite, an exhibition space and curatorial office in Montreal.