TIED' ESCAPE!

THE CURSE OF CORTEZ

AN UNEXPECTED JOURNEY

BY

GARY BOUTRY LABIGNE

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THE TEAM !

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PROLOGUE

AN EXPECTED JOURNEY

It's 6pm, it's spring and it's cold in Valenciennes, France. But in the Serre Numérique, at the Rubika school, it is effervescence. After organizing their departure for almost four months, the Tied Escape team is about to leave for the world's biggest video game show: the Game Developper Conference (GDC). This is a key date in the team's agenda because this trip required a lot of preparation and is the result of several weeks of work.

After having organized in the smallest details the sending of the team and the material, it is finally time to go to the other side of the world.

TIED ESCAPE : ORIGINS

HEART OF THE PROJECT

A controller in the world of video games, is the way you control your avatar in the game: a keyboard or a mouse for example. The aim of an Alternative Controller is to go beyond the already acquired, and to offer an experience you won't find in the video game store around the corner.

But how did this idea that places the player as the controller himself, trapped in the heart of an Aztec temple and having to jump on a chair to escape, come about?

In November 2018, the Alternative Controller course, given by Tatiana Vilela Dos Santos, teaches us to go further in our approach to the player, to prove that the player can feel emotions that are sometimes more intense through many means that go beyond the classic and usual controller.

This course allows us to experiment outside of a professional environment, a way to create a video game out of the classical workings.

After Tatiana shared with us her experience and approach to Game Design through the Alternative Controller, we are led to create groups, because our goal is simple: to create a functional Alternative Controller in one month.

The team is naturally formed by Joris Fabre, Louis Pruvost, Yann Gosset, Sébastien Butor and Gary Boutry.

Until then, we had only needed to prototype games in the classic video game and board game format. Here, we had to create a completely new experience, open to so many possibilities and questions that we couldn't see what our subject matter would look like.

Ideas keep coming up, one of them: creating a shooting game in the school via connected guns. The idea, although tempting, is quickly abandoned when Louis comes to sit on a chair and imagines himself tied to it. Sébastien, seeing Louis jump on his chair, imagines that the walls have buttons that Louis has to reach with his feet. Sebastian then uses his hands and imitates the presence of the buttons. It only took a few minutes to add another player also tied to a chair. The challenge for the players was therefore to coordinate together to press the buttons with their feet, all within a given time.

The idea was launched, in a few days we were going to meet Tatiana to propose it to her and start prototyping the game.

When the project was presented to Tatiana, we were confident enough to get her agreement and continue along this path. The idea showed many strong points for a Alternative Controller project: the complete immersion of the player in a situation worthy of a movie, the complete

elimination of the controller or keyboard, the total involvement of the player in the proposed experience. And of course, an obvious pop culture reference: *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade (Steven Spieldberg, 1989)*. Between us, who has never dreamed of playing the famous hero with the whip and the hat (or his father...)?

With an Alternative Controller project, you break away from traditional models and explore new ways to create an interactive experience.

Game Design covers many environments and not only video games.

Game Designers can be found in board games, in the automobile industry or in start-ups focusing on the future educational experience.

Making this kind of project is an opportunity, even if it doesn't lead to a trip to San Francisco. For *Tied Escape*, when choosing our team and topic, San Francisco was not an option, and it wasn't until a few days later that we learned that we could also apply for GDC.

The previous year, in 2018, *Mark Wars'* team, led by Mathias Johan, applied for the event and achieved the feat of being selected.

Of course, we didn't want to get ahead of ourselves about the possibility of being caught, but when third-year students are told that they can try out for this kind of event, dreams quickly take priority over reality.

The only certainty at that time was that we had an idea, and confidence in our project. And even beyond the idea of crossing the globe to present *Tied Escape,* we were intrigued and passionate about our game.

We were excited to be able to jump on our chairs and share this experience with other players.

Previous Page : *Mark Wars, the Alternative Controller project selected for GDC in 2018.*
Center and right: *The movie "Indiana Jones and the last Crusade" that inspired Tied Escape.*
Bottom : *Rubika school at the Serre Numerique.*

TATIANA VILELA DOS SANTOS

"I am a Game Designer and Interaction Artist working mainly on collaborative works. I like to mix creative disciplines, from art to engineering. I have an interactive multimedia project called MechBird. I design, develop games and installations as freelance for cultural events, companies and other artists. I like to share my knowledge and research in courses, conferences and workshops. I write articles about my design methods on Gamasutra.

I design playful experiences: digital and analog games or interactive installations based on original interfaces. I create and manufacture mainly hand-made physical devices and I work with new technologies. I realize these works, from hardware to software, through plastic and wood, sewing, painting, technical drawing, machining, electronics, programming, graphic and sound design... These experiences can be performed in exhibitions or live performances."

"THEY'RE UNDER THE SCHOOL !"

MAKING TIED ESCAPE

–"**W**hy are you here ?
-It's for a game project, we need the space and it doesn't seem to bother anyone…"

This sentence is undoubtedly one of the most repeated during the creation of the project. Tied Escape is a game that takes up space.

Players had to be given the opportunity to move around enough to make it feel like a challenge, but not too much, as the project remains physically demanding.

For several days, the game was taken in detail, to be more precise: we knew concretely where we were going. The first real question to ask you after you had your idea is: What do you need to create concretely ? Then: How do you go about doing it ?

At the time of creation, about two weeks after the launch of the project, the room where the game was going to come to life had to be a place where you could jump on chairs, attach buttons to the walls for the player to interact.

The traditional classroom was not enough, and we knew that the school had a few unused rooms. After a few requests, we couldn't get a room, so we decided to look for a place to put our set and our game.

It's in the underground of the school that we were able to settle down. An unlocked door leading to a small room. This small space was out of the main passageways, had three stone walls and a door through which we could pass our equipment and our multiple cables to connect the buttons.

The only small detail was that this room was a small corridor giving access to the school's server rooms. So we were setting up our game in the middle of a corridor.

To avoid arriving one morning and having our game swept away, we didn't have to be there,

we chose to contact Elodie Dubois, head of security at the school.

After several negotiation messages, the promise to tidy up the room after each use so as not to block access to the servers etc... we obtained permission to stay a full month in this corridor.

Even though many people have asked us about our presence here in the basement of the school, tinkering with cables to the server room.

It's a complicated part: explain that you're making a video game, with cables and chairs, and above all that it's serious !

Little anecdote: Sebastian and Joris were putting the buttons and connecting the cables, and a maintenance worker from the school came into the room, raising his voice and asking what we were doing here. After several explanations of the project, the agent continued to get angry and as he was leaving, he promised us that the next morning the game would be gone. So, as a precaution, the room was never left alone during the day, and the next morning we all arrived at 8:30-9:00 A.M. to protect our game. But that story never came to fruition in the end.

For the design of the game, we used a simple electronic board, which was one of the constraints of the project, imposed in the instructions. This board allowed our buttons to interact with the computer, to which it was connected with a simple USB cable.

The buttons were each unique, and we had to invest in more than fifty meters of cable so that the eight buttons could run along the wall and reach the computer, located outside the room.

To fix the buttons to the wall we used Grey Scotch tape.

Previous Page : *Louis and Sebastian in front of the game screen that works the first time!*
Above : *The scene is set, the chairs are ready, we're just waiting for the players.*
Top Right : *Stéphane André, Head of RUBIKA, and Philippe Tesson, Head of Supinfogame Bachelor, discover the game that goes to the GDC.*
Right : *Where Tied Escape was born.*
Far Right : *Tatiana and the other students come to see the Tied Escape project.*
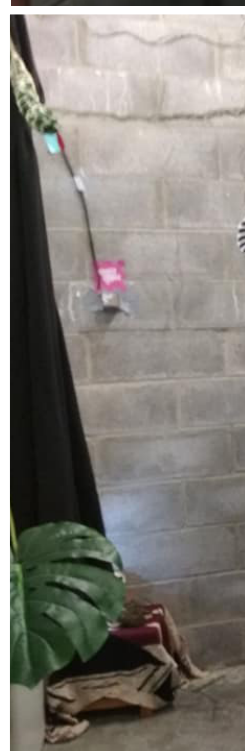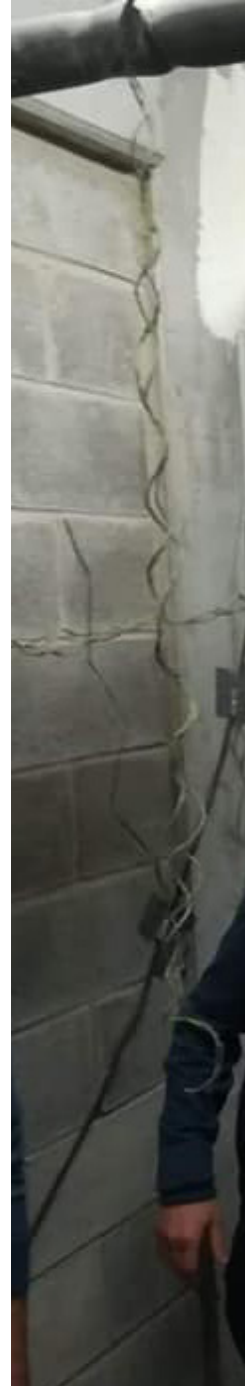
The walls were wet from being underneath the school, so it was very difficult to hold them together with anything other than construction scotch.

For the game itself, Sebastian, the team's programmer, took care of all the code, and linking the buttons in the Unity engine to the map.

The atmosphere and decorations are the result of a few purchases and the spirit of Louis, our Atmosphere Designer.

The game being quite physical, it seemed obvious to us to bring the player into an atmosphere that would take him out of his life.Obviously, you don't find yourself in the middle of a DisneyLand attraction, but the few details present add to the experience. That's what we think made Tied Escape selected for the GDC.

During the final presentation of the project, many people from the teaching profession came to see the project. Pressure and enthusiasm were both present, but this is what gives the projects their stamp.

CREATING THE ILLUSION

On Thursday, we learned that each group of Alternate Controllers could apply for GDC. The only issue was that the submission deadline was Saturday morning... and there was not just a simple form to fill out!

In 2018, Rubika sent her first GDC team to the other side of the world: *Mark Wars*. The seven students were able to present their project in front of thousands of people, including professionals from major studios such as Rockstar Game, Ubisoft and Nintendo.

For GDC 2019, four third-year groups also applied for this privilege. There was no limit to the number of applicants within the school.

To apply for the GDC in the Alternative Controller category, you must fill out a form specifying the space occupied by your game, the equipment used, the concept, etc... To support your form, you must also provide two videos : The first one where you have to specify the rules of your game and how it works in broad outline. The second one is a "mise en bouche" video, a trailer, allowing the jury to realize the atmosphere of your game and the fun it provides to your players.

One thing you should know: when Tatiana told us that you could apply for GDC, the projects had only been running for a week, and the Alternative Controller was not the most important project of the year, nor the one for which the most courses were given.

Tied Escape was just a game on paper, we knew how it was going to work, but nothing had been produced yet. Nothing at all. How do you sell a game that doesn't exist? More importantly, why not focus on the game, before submitting it to any kind of contest? Sebastian was asking himself that kind of question, and he was right.

We only had a month to create a game, so there was no time to waste making videos. Gary and Louis insisted, and the afternoon was dedicated to buying and collecting material to set up the trailer.

Before midnight, when the school must be empty, we had to make a video trailer of about 1 min 30. Louis brought back all his costumes reminiscent of the Indiana Jones universe, he would play the famous adventurer, and Gary would be Indiana Jones' father.

Go to the underground of the school, where we'd already spotted the small room. Turning off the lights, placing on the walls printed Aztec logos cut out in a hurry, we created the most improvised cursed temple in history. Tight shots, fake banana branches, and a few shots taken from the original Indiana Jones movies, and that was it. Our video trailer had its components.

There are a lot of cut scenes, and a non-existent storyboard. Louis seemed to know where he was going with his trailer, but during the editing, only a few of the micro scenes were kept.

In the trailer, we wanted to make people understand the context, an Aztec temple, the characters and what they were doing there: They're trapped, how do you get out? By clicking on symbols on the walls. And of course, to make people understand our assumed universe: Indiana Jones.

In the trailer, you have to highlight the atmosphere and make up your game objective so that it fits into your narrative. You have to say to your player "Look, you're going to experience this! ". Your trailer should make you want to, not just show a game.

TIED ESCAPE

The whole Friday was dedicated to the editing of the video trailer. Yann filmed us for several hours and we had long minutes of video to "sell" our game to the jury.

As for the video explaining the rules of the game, the objective with this video is to be as clear as possible. Even if it sounds boring when you speak, as long as the game is understandable, it's fine.

What Gary was looking for was a simple video, where two people explain the rules of the game, like a youtuber talks in front of his camera.

To be as clear as possible, we tried not to stay focused on Sebastian and Gary for a minute: that would have made us lose understanding and interest. But the challenge was to succeed in showing how a game, that hasn't yet seen the light of day, works.

In the video you can see Gary holding physical buttons in his hand: the idea here is to show the technical side used to make the game work.

Two people are also tied to two chairs. The context in which the two players are going to find themselves, factually, is again posed.

The buttons are not yet fixed to the walls, at this point in the production of the game. All we know is that the player will have to press them with their feet. For the purposes of the video, we quickly fixed a button to the wall, without any connection to the inside. The shots follow one another and show a prototype game with an interface created especially for the video. These are simple buttons in the Unity game engine, which are connected via the magic of editing to the real buttons on the wall.

On both nights of shooting, Yann took care of all the camera shots. But as said before, many rushs are not used in the final versions.

For the final editing of the videos, we had little time left. The days being taken by our courses, we only had the two

nights to prepare our registration. It must have been around 7pm when we started the real editing of the two videos, the trailer having been edited many times to keep the focus on our intentions.

As producing a trailer with scenery, costumes and a story in such a short time is an ambitious project, the night from Friday to Saturday was short.

Sebastian was in charge of editing the explanation video and Gary was in charge of editing the video trailer. Yann, the group' cameraman, stayed at the side for a support question.

Arriving at midnight, the team is forced to leave the Digital Greenhouse, and the video editing software. The two videos are obviously not really finished.

So the editing process ends at Gary's, with both editors having to install trial versions of Adobe After Effect for the few hours of editing time remaining. The registration closes at 9am on Saturday morning, and

the two videos are finished around 5am the same day.

A lot of the bands said "no time to produce two videos in two days", but we were all in favour of "if we want to, we can". Assume that you have nothing to lose, and at worst... everything to gain.

GDC juries are American geeks, just like we're French geeks. Don't hesitate to give it all in your trailer, make your game a unique experience, and highlight all its atmosphere and originality. If your game is very technical, put it forward.

For us, it was about immersing the jury in a world of adventure.

Little story : to be sure to be seen in the first projects, the original game was called A Tied Escape. With the letter A at the beginning, we were sure to be among the first in the lists.

"What do you mean we're caught ?!"

"If you are told that you can go to the other side of the world only if you accept certain small conditions, say yes, you will always find a way to make arrangements once you get there.

Two or three days after applying to the GDC, we get some initial questions from John Polson. At that time, we didn't know who it was, but as we went through the exchanges and when we received the confirmation email, we understood that it was the organizer of the Alternative Controller category.

His questions were very unclear. He didn't let much information escape, and on the contrary, he was looking for a lot of information about our project.

John asked us if we had considered more interactions than just buttons, like a hidden button, or a joystick to move with our feet, to direct things on the screen, etc...

At this stage of production, we were only two days after we signed up, so our priority was to make the game we had imagined work, before adding new elements.

But when you're asked those kinds of questions, and you have the opportunity to go to San Francisco, you say yes. You get into the jury game, you have to satisfy them: "You'll always find a way to settle once you get there," as Louis says.

On December 3, we received the first question from John, and on December 5 he answered again. Those were the two longest days of our lives. We didn't know what to expect, whether the answers had convinced them or whether they were just routine little questions and we were just making our movies in our heads. For Gary and Louis, who started this GDC project, that was the case.

On December 5th, John sends us an email asking us if the normally allocated dimensions can be sufficient. We answered yes, as the game was not yet done, the measurements of the playing space did not exist, and this allowed us to adapt our game to the constraints of GDC.

In his email, John left us this little message: "If we did (not final yet) select you". If this kind of message comes to you, bend to their request, and even if you know that some points can't be done, don't worry, you have a game, and you'll present it to the GDC. Your vision and your time are your only masters.

On December 7, 2019, we received confirmation that Tied Escape was selected to attend the Game Developer Conference in San Francisco, in the Alternative Controller category.

"I was having breakfast when I wanted to check my email, and then I read the confirmation. I literally dropped my spoon in my bowl and was speechless in front of my computer," remembers Sebastian.

When Sebastian made the announcement to the team, the five of us around the computer couldn't believe our eyes. At that moment we were in Storytelling class, and I think Olivier Henriot, our speaker, didn't quite understand what was going on.
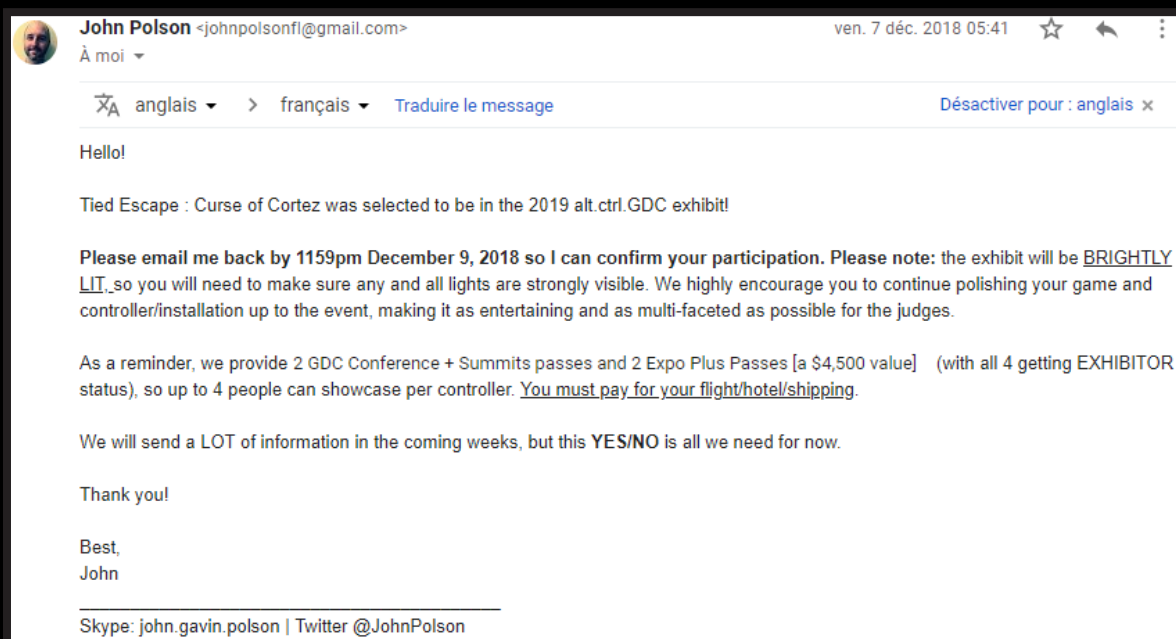
We all walked out of the room, gloating that we had achieved this feat.

But the hardest part was still to come.

Above: *The front of the coveted Game Developper Conference (GDC).*
Below : *The email confirming the selection of Tied Escape for the GDC by the organizer of the Alternative Controller category, John Polson.*

John Polson <johnpolsonfl@gmail.com>   ven. 7 déc. 2018 05:41
À moi

文A anglais ▾   >   français ▾   Traduire le message   Désactiver pour : anglais ✕

Hello!

Tied Escape : Curse of Cortez was selected to be in the 2019 alt.ctrl.GDC exhibit!

Please email me back by 1159pm December 9, 2018 so I can confirm your participation. Please note: the exhibit will be <u>BRIGHTLY LIT,</u> so you will need to make sure any and all lights are strongly visible. We highly encourage you to continue polishing your game and controller/installation up to the event, making it as entertaining and as multi-faceted as possible for the judges.

As a reminder, we provide 2 GDC Conference + Summits passes and 2 Expo Plus Passes [a $4,500 value]   (with all 4 getting EXHIBITOR status), so up to 4 people can showcase per controller. <u>You must pay for your flight/hotel/shipping.</u>

We will send a LOT of information in the coming weeks, but this **YES/NO** is all we need for now.

Thank you!

Best,
John
_____
Skype: john.gavin.polson | Twitter @JohnPolson

JOHN GAVIN POLSON

He is responsible for managing the Humble Bundle fundraising and publishing initiative on PC, console and mobile devices, and for trying to showcase diverse talent, in part through the Humble Originals program. He is also the co-creator and organizer of the Alternative Controller section held annually at the GDC in San Francisco since 2014.

Among his achievements in the world of video games, John Polson is known for creating: Destructoid, Engadget, Ars Technica, Polygon, Eurogamer and SlashGear.

John is also co-founder of Media Indie Exchange, an event that allows the press, publishers and independent developers to interact with each other. Since 2012, he has worked with IGN, GDC Next, IndieCade, Sony, ID@XBOX and SIGGRAPH. He shares his experiences on a professional panel of LGBT games at PAX South 2015 and PAX Prime 2015. He was also the keynote speaker in 2014 for the Nordic Game Jam, and organized more than 20 indies for the Minecraft convention in Mojang in 2013, 2015 and 2016. For Sony, he judged the finalists for the PlayStation Mobile Game Jam, whose winners were announced at the 2013 GDC.

REWORKING THE EXPERIENCE

This is a crucial moment on the day you have to question your choices to adapt them to an audience and a place you don't know. Getting out of your comfort zone is never easy.

On the same day we received the final email from John Polson, we chose to meet to discuss how to proceed. Now that we had said yes to everything, and that had paid off, we had to send a game to San Francisco that we would be proud to present and above all that would contribute to our image and that of the school.

The first question was to add a graphic artist to our team. The choice fell on Pauline, a friend of all the members of the group.

Pauline would be in charge of reviewing the game's interface, the atmosphere, the poster and especially our antagonist: Cortez.

For the context, Louis took care to write us a small document about the atmosphere, the universe and the context.

The players were adventurers trapped in an Aztec temple and under the curse of the ghost of Cortez, the famous Conquistador. In order to escape, they would have to succeed in chaining together symbol combinations designed to open the door in a given time.

Joris was in charge of the technical part of the project, the electronic board, the cables, the buttons, and above all to think of a way to free ourselves from the walls of the room, which we couldn't have at the GDC exhibition.

That was one of the problems we had: GDC was a source of unknowns. The Mark Wars team briefed us on how the management was going: for the tickets, the installation…But without a photo or video, we had difficulty to imagine the place.

So we had to move on to tatons, and above all organize our production on two key dates: the final rendering of the school project in front of Tatiana, and the presentation in March at the GDC.

For the final rendering in front of Tatiana and the school, we continued on our way: two chairs, a screen and mostly buttons taped to the walls.

But for the GDC, the whole experience had to be reviewed. How were we going to transport chairs by plane? What would be strong enough to replace a wall and accommodate eight buttons? What if a chair broke on the spot? What new experience could we propose to the GDC compared to what we have already shown them? Is the project really feasible in the time requested while our weeks are occupied by our school projects?

So many questions that we answered in a few weeks, dividing up the work, and above all calling on outside help.

It's important to know that just because you're a group of six to go, doesn't mean you have to do everything. The school, businesses and other students are also there to support and help you.

So, to replace the walls of the room, we thought of creating wooden pillars. The walls offered a stable and safe support, but the playing experience was the same in each part because the cables of the buttons were of different

lengths depending on their position in the room. Having pillars allowed us to arrange the "temple" as we wanted. We no longer had the fear that the stand would be too big or too small, the pillars would define the playing area and above all offer a removable Level Design.

The plans for the design of these three pillars to accommodate our eight buttons were supervised by Louis and Corentin Mouton, a product design student to whom we owe the success of the pillars.

The plans were completed in about two weeks during the month of February. Louis was in charge of finding wood light enough to be transported

in the suitcases, and above all strong enough to be kicked for three full days.

We received the pillars only a few days before the departure for the GDC. Louis had spent almost a full week at the Nouvelle Forge, where the laser cutter was free to use, which saved us quite a bit of money.

Another thing we've been working on is buttons. During the school rendering, the buttons were taped to the wall, so they didn't interfere with the players, who could jump on their chairs freely and without hindrance.

With the decision to take pillars, it was necessary to review the installation of the cables, and above all: did we keep the cables?

GDC is also an opportunity to test new things, including new technologies.

For the buttons, we first thought we could solve the problem of cables by using buttons connected via Wi-Fi.
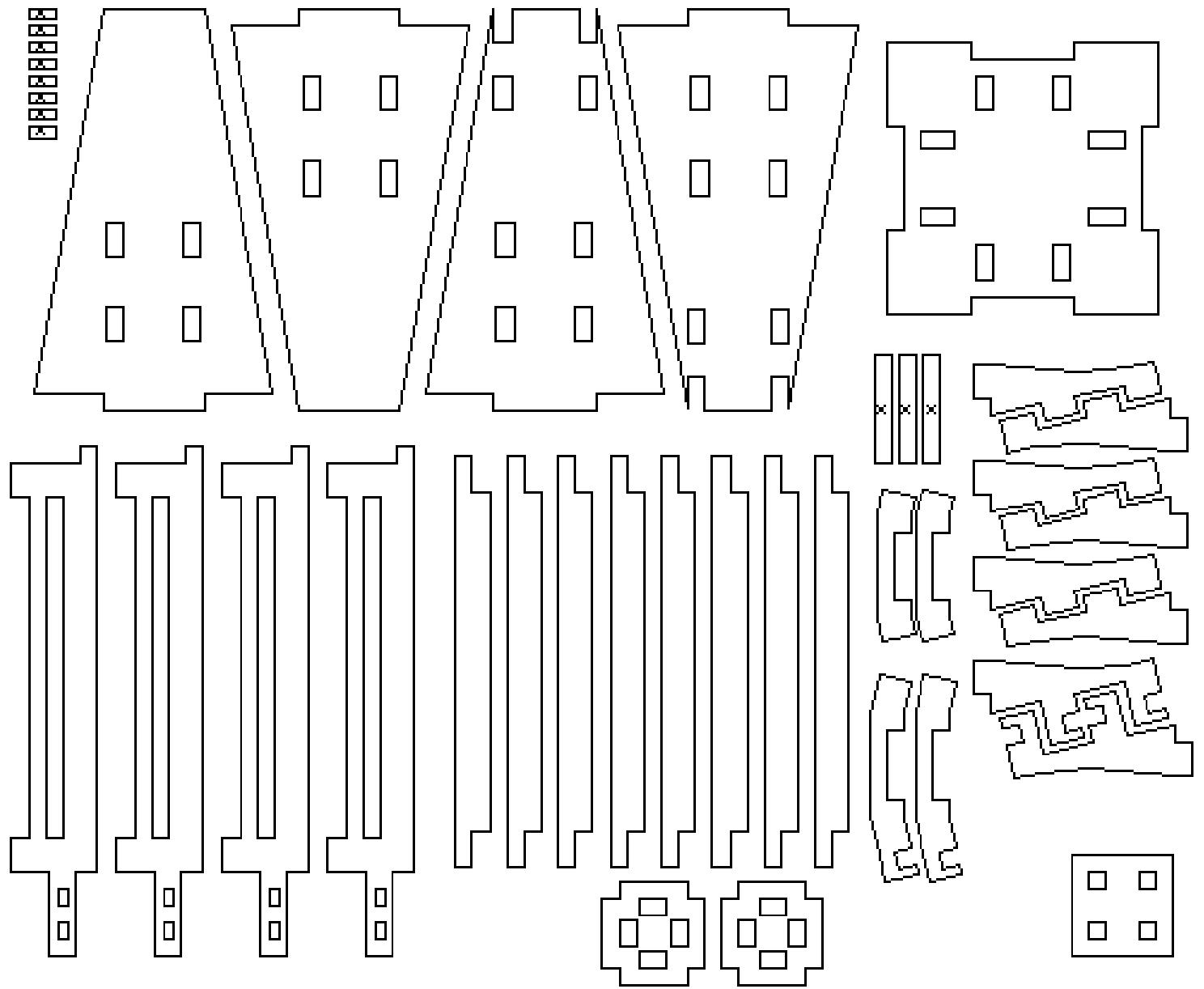
It was Joris' task to learn how this technology works, its constraints, and especially how to make it work with the Unity engine.

For a few weeks, Joris was able to talk to professionals, helped by Tatiana to get in touch. They had also looked into using technology via WiFi. But in the time available to us, it was impossible to solve the problems that this technology gave us.

Another risk: GDC is a place where everything is connected, from the VR stands to your badges. There are waves everywhere, and the big risk would have been to see our buttons malfunctioning because of these parasitic waves.

So we decided to keep the cables as links between the map and our buttons. If this had been possible, it would of course have been preferable to have state-of-the-art, more professional equipment.

One of the main concerns with cables in our organization was their weight, which we had taken out of the equation when loading our suitcases.

Louis had to fall back on a different type of wood for the pillars, which was lighter, so that the suitcases would not be overloaded for the trip and would not cost us extra.

We must not lose sight of the fact that we are going to a convention, so the format of our project had to be adapted accordingly. We had already solved two problems with buttons and pillars.

Previous Page : *Louis and Joris prepare the pillars to put them in the suitcases before departure.*
Top : *The cutting plans designed by Corentin Mouton for the project.*
Right : *Pillars are cut before being assembled.*
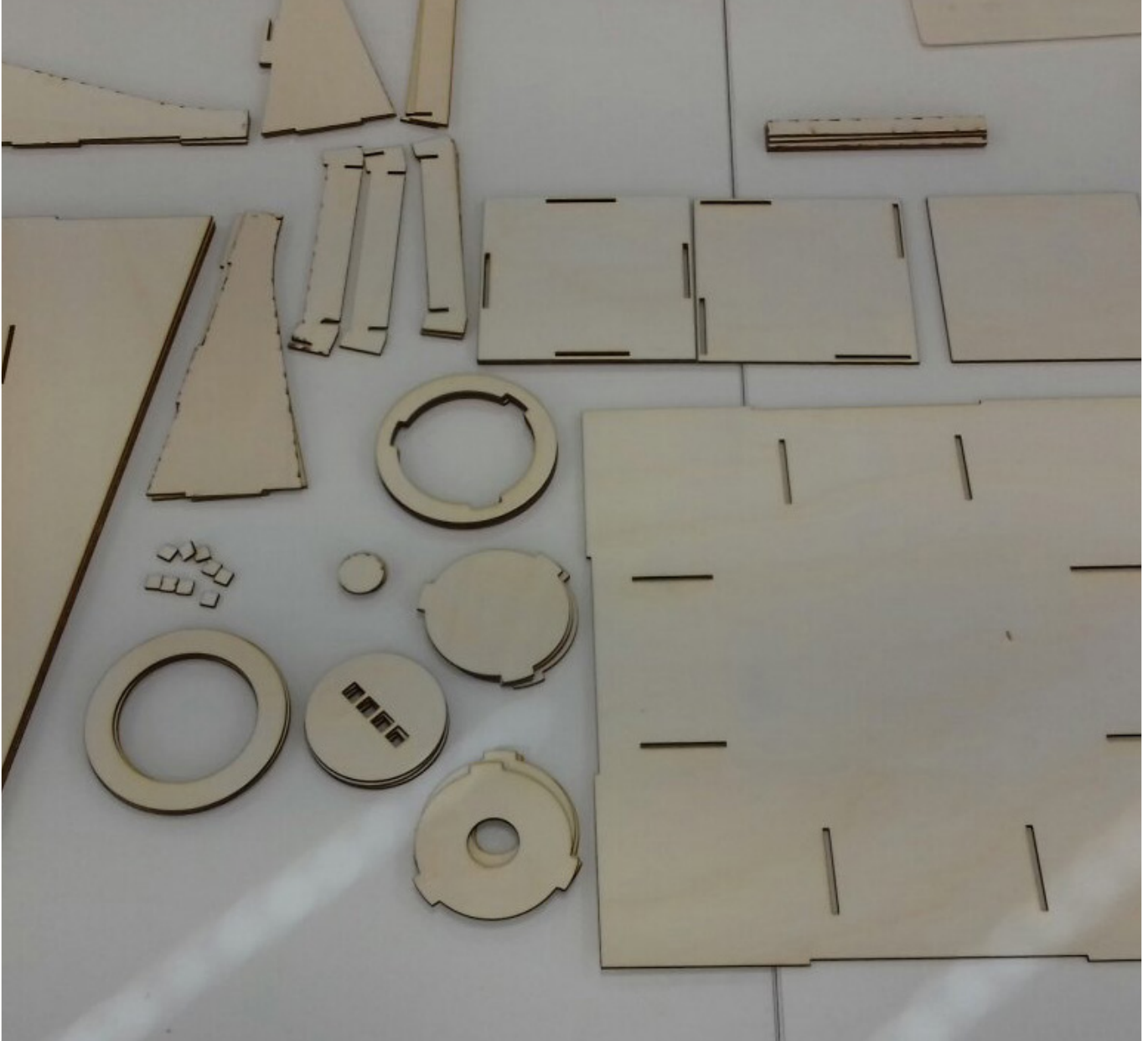
As we weren't sure what to expect, we wanted to present a game aimed at the general public, which ideally could be marketed. With this in mind, we decided to create a level editor for families and parties with friends.

Sebastian, the team's developer, was in charge of programming the entire game under the Unity engine. He also worked on the complete aspect of the interface and the program allowing the creation of custom levels.

The main goal of this system was to make the game modular, and thus the layout of our pillars and buttons once in place.

Since we didn't have a really innovative technology, we had to focus on the atmosphere and the flexibility of our environment and our levels.

Sebastian spent several weeks on this system. Thanks to this, we were ready to set up on any stand, and able to adapt to our location.

BRING CORTÈZ TO LIFE

Now we had to create a strong visual identity for our project, something that would make it unique and allow our players to forget themselves for a few moments.

Pauline, new to the project, got to work very quickly to produce the game's visuals. The work had to focus mainly on Cortez, our antagonist, on the interface and on the game's poster, which would be highlighted everywhere to give *Tied Escape* its artistic identity.

The first step in graphic production was to find a good visual for our bad guy: Cortez the Conquistador. He had to be visually the "bad guy" of our adventure, but shouldn't scare to the point of disgust. The idea was to take the image that we all have today of a conquistador of the time, very noble, very clean on him, and to add this nasty side straight out of the Disney universe.

In our universe, Cortez is a ghost, trapped in an Aztec temple, who likes to play with the adventurers he holds captive.

One of the main references for the character's expressions was the character of Philip II, in the game Civilization VI. The physical features of the character could address any audience and translated just about any expression you wanted to give him.

The character had to appear threatening. But, if a player wins, we wanted him to look like a sore loser, getting angry when players succeed in a challenge.

So Cortez has three main expressions. The first one is a happy look, satisfied to have managed to trap the players. You can see it as soon as the game is launched: he starts laughing. The second expression is the one that has to show his annoyance, and his bad loser side, each time the player succeeds in a combo imposed by the ghost. With each success, Cortez makes a pout and is designed to make the player

CORTÈZ

PHILIPPE II · CIV VI

feel happy, making him understand that he is getting closer to victory. Cortez's third expression is fear; he lets out a cry of dread in front of the adventurers who manage to escape from the temple. These three expressions perfectly reflect the character of our villain.

The development of Cortez took several weeks of graphic research, since it is the image of the game. The bluish colors are there to recall the spectral side of Cortez.

As said before, the character research done by Louis, will draw from the character of Philip II, from the game Civilization VI, but also from the general image of a conquistador. The character's pencilled aspect is inspired by the art of Boris Grozev.

Cortez is a sadist, and the centuries have not made him more merciful. His face almost always wears a satisfied smile, delighted to have trapped the newcomers.

Previous Page : *Pauline Sion, the group's graphic artist, working on the conception of the Cortez character.*
Top : *Cortez of Tied Escape and Philip II of Civilization VI, the latter having mostly inspired the first one.*
Right: *First graphic research for the bust of Cortez . The satisfied smile of the character must show his sadistic side.*

Top Left : *The various expressions of Philip II which were used as references to create those of Cortez.*

Top Right : *Once approved by the team, this sculpture of Cortez in all his terror will serve as the basis for the proportions and final design of the character.*

Bottom : *The three main expressions of the character are based on that of Philip II and on the feeling we wanted to give the player.*

ADAPTING TO GDC

THE INTERFACE OF THE GAME

T interface d'un jeu est l'une des plus importantes choses à penser. C'est ce qui va suivre le joueur tout au long de son aventure, et c'est aussi ce qui rend les interactions compréhensibles.

When the project was presented to school officials during the course, no graphic constraints were imposed. Cortez only existed in the pitch of the game, and the interface was a montage of different backgrounds and images. The rendering was cold, and above all looked like a prototype. So everything had to be redesigned.

Pauline, in charge of graphic production, and Sébastien, in charge of the Unity engine project, got together to think and design the layout of the interface, and the graphic aspect it would have.

Everything had to be understandable at first glance, since the players would be in a race against time: they shouldn't waste time looking for information on the screen. After several positioning tests proposed by Sébastien, we opted for a simple and sober interface.

Decorative assets are placed at the top and bottom of the screen and the combos that the players have to perform are placed in the center. The lives of the players, three in number, are placed at the bottom right.

An important detail in the creation of the game's interface: it is not only present on the screen. Indeed, the player interacts mostly with the pillars around him, and must activate the buttons that Cortez asks him to.

For better readability and to make the player's experience easier and better, the buttons correspond to an animal, a color and a shape. These three pieces of information are displayed on the screen as test instructions.

For immersion, the animals have been redesigned by Pauline in the theme of the Aztec temples, keeping the choice to make our universe more cartoon-like.

Top Right : *The old interface of the game during the presentation in front of the school management.*
Right: *The final interface of the game produced by Pauline Sion.*

A BUDGET'S COMING UP...

You are six students who have to go halfway around the world in just three months. Even if it can be scary, you have to organize everything in detail, and on your own time!

The first question we asked ourselves after receiving confirmation of our selection at GDC was: how much will it cost us? Being selected is the first step in a very long journey of several weeks of organization to make our seven days in San Francisco go as smoothly as possible.

The first reactions of our group were to consider paying for almost the entire trip. On the spot, it is better not to rely too much on potential financial support.

It was imperative to do the math and figure out how much all this was going to cost us. Gary, the project manager, and Pauline, the Game Artist, were put in charge of managing and planning the budget. After a day looking for the best flights, hotels in San Francisco, and calculating the food, transportation like the train to the airport, or the prototype itself that needed to be completely redesigned (*see Adapting to GDC*), the final budget was announced.

In total, the trip would cost us about 5000€ for six people. This is quite low considering the destination and the time we would spend there (a full week).

The two biggest costs were the plane tickets, which had to be booked very quickly, because every week the price was increasing. So the tickets cost us about 2500€, and about 1100€ was allocated to the accommodation on the spot.

Gary was the only one who had ever been to California, just a year before our trip. He knew the airlines, and he knew the city of San Francisco. So he was the one who booked the tickets and arranged accommodations for the six of us.

The hotel he found was in the heart of the city, about 20 minutes walk from the GDC.

The airline they used was the cheapest of all: Norwegian Airlines.

But 3600€ is not something that everyone can spend like that, especially as Christmas approaches. Gary's parents were able to advance the purchase of all the tickets and the hotel reservation in agreement with all the parents of the band members. Your parents will be your best support on this trip.

Once the plane tickets were booked, we could breathe, our coming to GDC was assured. But the rest would come later. Now we had to anticipate and calculate how much the prototype would cost us to produce.

From cutting the pillars to operating the buttons, it was all about economy. We were moving forward in tatons, not knowing how much we could afford. So we had to do the best we could for less money. Our only certainty was that we had spent 3600€, because our parents had only advanced the money.

It's a huge pressure to find the money, and to prepare such a large budget for such a project in great detail. It was a question of putting into practice what the school was teaching us, but with a few years' advance.

During three months of preparation, Gary ran around to make sure that everything fit within the budget. To the point where he was having a nervous breakdown around Christmas. So here's a little advice: take a step back from your project, it's a big event, but you're still students who have the right to make mistakes.

Previous Page : *The final poster of the game with the character of Cortez dominating the players trapped in his temple.*

PREPARE THE JOURNEY

...AND YOU CAN FIND IT

"**Q**uand on vous donne du pognon vous prenez, c'est comme ça c'est la règle, c'est simple", citation de Dame Séli dans *Kaamelott*

The budget is set fairly quickly. Airline fares rise quickly, and rooms in well-placed hotels are quickly occupied during the GDC period in San Francisco.

When everything is booked, it is now time to see how to pay for the whole trip. And our first action was to go and see the Mark Wars team to find out how they had financed their week in the US. To our great surprise, most of the expenses had been paid by them themselves, for a team of seven people.

It was difficult for us to afford to pay so much money. GDC only provides four tickets to the event, and it's up to the team to get the extra tickets, about €300 for the two tickets we were missing. Just for that alone, the price was high.

So we turned to the school. Our Pedagogical Manager, Philippe Tesson, helped us enormously in the search for monetary funds. With the help of Stéphane André also, director of the RUBIKA school, they were able to provide us with an amount of 2000€. But this did not even allow us to pay for the tickets which cost around 2300€.

In January, Gary proposes the launch of participatory financing. The proposal surprises,

then seduces the rest of the team. The implementation of a Tipeee is launched and the calculations begin again. The Tipeee setup starts and the calculations continue. Collaborative financing brings new costs: the compensations that you propose for your project to be supported and the percentage that the site will take from your fundraising are the two main sources of expenses to be expected.

Preparation of the Tipeee page, creation of a facebook page for the project, t-shirt and sweatshirt in the image of the game, everything is set up in the month of January to seek funding and strengthen the credibility of the project.

Every week, Gary communicates on the facebook page, and the amount requested on the Tipeee is set: 1500€ is the maximum the team wants to reach, but 1000€ is still the most possible. It's all about being convinced of the success of the action undertaken.

Alongside all this, Pauline and Gary are putting together a folder intended for the mayors of the towns of Anzin and Valenciennes, with the intention of asking for funds in exchange for the promotion of the Valencian territory internationally.

Previous Page: *The Tipeee page of the Tied Escape project has already reached 1000€!*
Above : *The entire team at the RUBIKA Open House.*
Below : *Sebastian poses for the pleasure of the camera.*

The file was sent by Stéphane André, who knows the two mayors well. Within a few days, we received an answer from the town hall of Anzin, open to discussion. No response was received from the town hall of Valenciennes.

At the same time Gary went to talk to the school's communication managers as the School Open Days were approaching and it was a key date to get known and try to win funds via the Tipeee.

"It all happened very quickly, I spent three-quarters of February raising funds and communicating about the project, both in class schedules and in my free time," says Gary.

In the team's calendar, the open house is the first stop on this eventful February. Gary spent two days with Louis planning how the booth would be laid out and decorated, editing videos and printing flyers to promote the project.

On School Open Days, the entire team is there to present the game to the general public. As the game is physical, it was not testable, but the stand was designed to immerse visitors in the atmosphere and to convince.

At the end of this day, Stéphane André came to see us to announce that the SIGH (Société Immobilière Grand Hainaut), had chosen to support us up to 1000€! An unexpected news that gave a boost to the team!

The following week, the town of Anzin proposes an appointment to discuss the project: Louis and Pauline meet her for a morning meeting.

The town hall of Anzin proposes the setting up of an afternoon where people would come to test our game, and in exchange for this service, the town would pay us 300€.

The offer is first of all interesting, especially since the tipeee is quite low, but it would have required us to put in place means and time that we didn't have. At that time, we were almost a month away from the start, and it should not be forgotten that we were still students with classes and renderings.

While he is on vacation Gary receives a call from a radio host: RFM wants to meet him to discuss the participatory financing of the project.

The project exceeds all our expectations. It's a dream come true and that's when we have to keep our feet on the ground.

In order for our participatory financing to succeed, the school had contacted the local radio stations, and they had found our original project and our approach mature enough to be the subject of a few minutes' column.

The meeting was organised, and the whole team went to Lille, to the recording studios of the very famous RFM radio station. The euphoria is at its height. And it's really a unique and unimaginable experience that we're living at that moment.

We were light years away from considering such opportunities a few months earlier, when the game was just a simple student project.

After an hour in the recording room, we wanted to immortalize the moment, and today's photo represents the reward for our investment in the project, but also the opportunities we were given to achieve our goals.

Only a few days after our return from the RFM studio, we were contacted by NRJ radio who also wanted to interview the band members about Tipeee who had just passed the €1000 mark.

For the meeting with NRJ, it was going to take place at the school: Pauline and Gary were interviewed about the project. The question of the continuation of the project was discussed: for us, success (or not) at GDC was going to be the answer for the future of Tied Escape.

At the beginning of March, the budget we had was 4000€, half of which came from the school, and the rest from our sponsor, the SIGH, and money raised on the Tipeee.

For several weeks, participatory financing did not change much. The first base of funders were above all our families and close friends, our parents... Now that this base had already contributed, we arrived at the second base: the acquaintances of our relatives and friends.

Only word of mouth could help us get started, as well as active communication on social networks so that people don't forget us.

Gary was extremely active on social networks, and was in charge of responding and thanking donors. Every little piece of news was posted on facebook, and gave credit to our project.

Two weeks before the departure, the school announced that Tatiana, who was supposed to accompany us, could not be present at the GDC, and the money of her plane ticket came back to us. So we had an extra 500€ in our budget, and only a few days before the big departure.

The more the days passed, and the more we communicated about the Tipeee's deadline. It was only in the last days that we reached the sum of 1520€ for our participative financing.

The objective was achieved, and we could leave with the joy of knowing that this trip was financed, and that everything we had planned could be considered. The material for the construction of the game, the accommodation on the spot, the transport, the food, everything was now taken care of by the school, our donors and sponsors.

Our project had gained credibility thanks to radio interviews, intensive communication and our investment. To support us even more, we received a new interview by the very famous gaming website: Gamasutra. We are extremely proud to find there an interview of our team, even if it does not concern participatory financing, it contributed to the notoriety of the project.

Previous Page : *The first photo of the team for the Gamasutra com and article.*
Above : *Gary, lead project manager and community manager of the team.*
Below : *The team looking towards San Francisco after RFM's radio interview*

THE D DAY

TO SAN FRANCISCO !

To reach San Francisco, the team had to go to Lille by train, then catch a train to Paris, then fly to Oakland, and then take the subway to San Francisco...

A few weeks before the departure, the team had been able to recover a room to store its equipment, and above all, luggage. Because the departure was scheduled for after school on Friday, March 15, 2019.

At that very moment, you begin to realize that you're going on a long journey. Our friends who are not leaving greet us and wish us good luck, we say goodbye to our pedagogical leaders who have supported and helped us since the beginning of the project. And we realize that you are leaving for a whole week on the other side of the world with people who are not our family.

The passports and ESTA had been managed by Pauline a few weeks earlier, and transportation to the California hotel had been booked. What the team feared was the confiscation of the hold luggage. Imagine going from France to the USA during the Vigipirate period with your bags loaded with cables and electronic equipment. Anything can happen !

For the time being, the team is going, on Friday evening, to Pauline's parents who have kindly agreed to accommodate everyone, and take the members in the direction of the train, which will leave for Charles De Gaulle airport.

The next morning, at 6:00 a.m. everyone's awake. The excitement is at its peak, as is the stress. Everybody eats before the departure and Pauline's parents drive the team to the Lille train station. The train leaving for Charles de Gaulle is waiting for us.

Gary doesn't wait until he is on American soil to shoot pictures of the others, even when they are asleep on the train.

When we are at the airport, three hours ahead of our departure, we wait for the counter to check in our suitcases.

Once all the papers were checked in, we were able to make our way to the airport's control zone and then finally reach the duty free zone. No problems had been spotted until then. It was always a great fear that we had until we returned to France: what if it didn't go as planned?

There were a lot of scenarios to consider, a bad date, a check of our suitcases, our rooms not checked in once we got there, chairs and screens missing when we arrived at the booth.

Because, during our four months of preparation, we had exchanged with the GDC organizers and were able to inform them of our needs for the smooth running of our game. Once we were there, we were going to be able to get chairs and screens, but we knew nothing about their quality.

Boarding for the flight to Oakland, much cheaper than a flight to San Francisco, was about to begin. This time, we were going to make a dream come true. But before the dream, there's the 12-hour flight to keep. During those 12 hours, we were able to admire the vast white landscapes of Greenland and Canada, play Nintendo DS and above all discover that we weren't the only French students leaving for GDC.

Previous Page: *Waking up at 7 a.m. before the big departure deserves breakfast.*
Left :   *Waiting at CDG before leaving for GDC.*
Below : *Arriving in the States with the American style !*

For three months we lived and worked on our only project, and we knew nothing about GDC, its scope. Meeting other students, albeit older, reassured us about the issue of change of scenery.

Once we arrived in Oakland, there were two big questions: Will we get the suitcases back without any problems (with American laws you can't swear by anything) and above all, would Gary go back to France?

Small anecdote: In 2012 Gary was checked at the airport in Miami for taking a picture of the American flag and it was forbidden to take pictures in airports. In 2017 he arrived in Los Angeles and was taken to the police station as soon as he arrived after the incident in 2012.

So, in 2019, only two years after his trip to California, it was impossible for us to know whether the American authorities would hold him responsible. Curiously, there was never any mention of these two arrests when we arrived, despite the fact that Gary was assigned to a special queue, cut off from the group. In the end, no problem.

When we left the Oakland airport on Saturday evening, March 16, 2019, we were six hours jet-lagged. We were able to go to the shuttle bus, then to the subway and finally arrive in the heart of the city of San Francisco, just as we had planned for several months already

SAN FRANCISCO

VISITING THE CITY

The hardest part is over, you're there and you have some free time before the GDC begins. Enjoy the Californian way of life!

Before spending the day in San Francisco, we checked into our hotel the night before. It was actually a youth hostel, where we were able to get a room for just the six of us.

Only the rooms were included in the price, and we had to make arrangements for food. When you find yourself for a week with people you don't know privately, the first few days can be destabilizing and even create some conflict.

But at that time, it was complicated to decrease our joy of being present for a week in California.

The first night passes, and the next day we plan to visit the city. Our only constraint was to be back at the Moscone Center by 5:00 pm, because visitors and exhibitors had to pick up their tickets the day before the show.

As for the city tour, the pictures will speak for themselves, no need to detail everything.

So we arrive on Sunday March 17th at 5pm in front of the Moscone Center, which we had spotted earlier in the day. It was actually a huge complex of three separate buildings, with a huge line of people standing in front of the different entrances.

Once the doors were open, the wait was quite short, and it was in a very large hall that many ticket offices were located. Visitors and exhibitors register on computers, and once this is done, they go to the counters where name cards will be printed, placed in badges. If you are an exhibitor, as we were, the four tickets offered by GDC will receive a blue tab that reads "Exhibitor". It is this strip that will allow you to enter the show two days earlier to set up our booth.
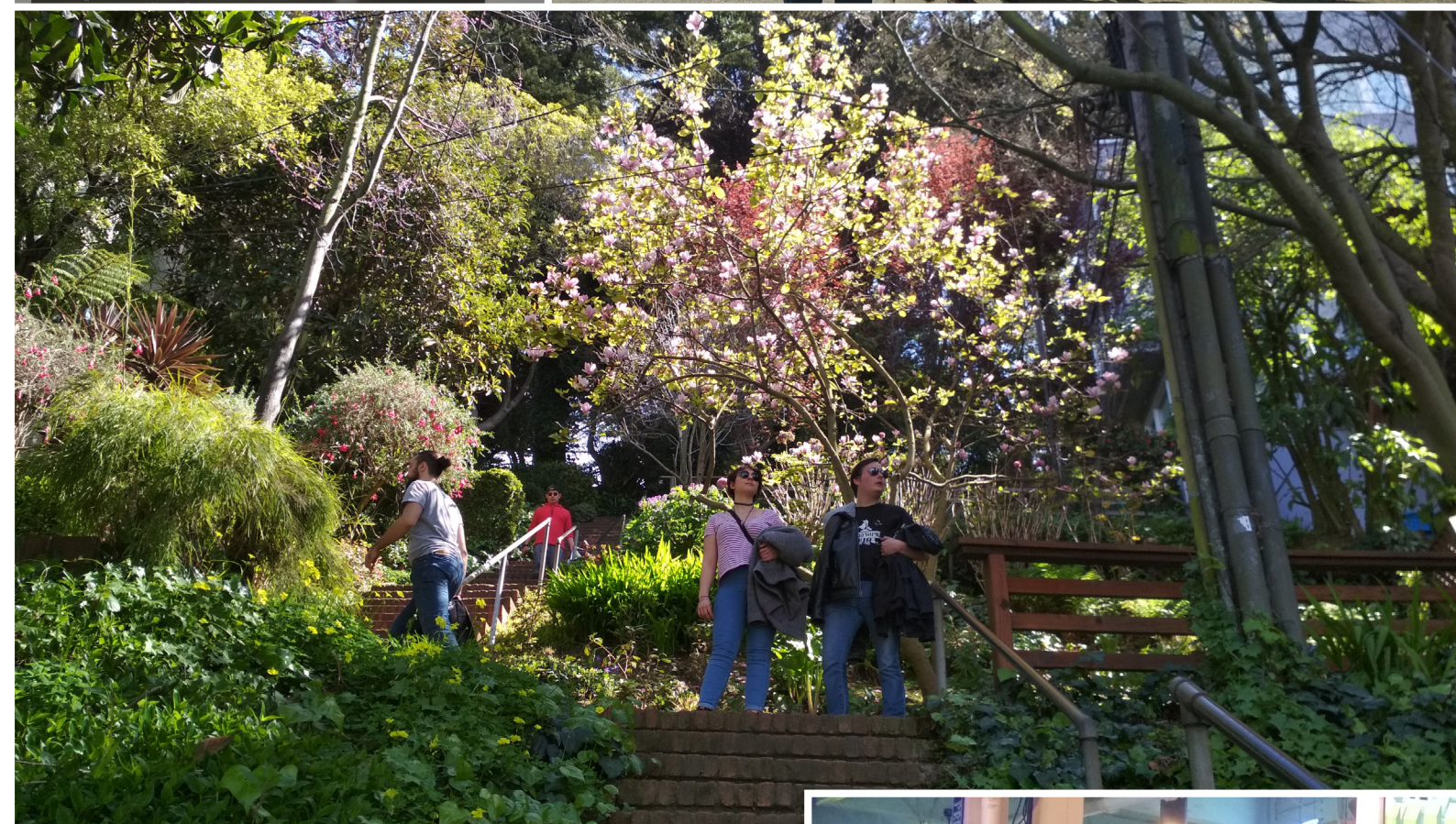
THE GDC EXHIBITION

CHALLENGES OF THE INSTALLATION

The GDC is spread over five days, two of which are dedicated to the preparation of the stands and the passage of the jury. The other three days are entirely dedicated to the exhibition and the public.

The big day has arrived. We had received the opening hours of the show the day before, and only exhibitors could access the installation area. When you pick up your badges for the GDC, only the four badges offered by the event could have a blue strip that read "Exhibitor". So in our case, two of our group members could not access the inside of the Moscone Center for the installation of the project.

We arrived at the entrance of the Moscone Center in the morning, loaded with our suitcases containing the game material. The controllers made sure that only the exhibitors came to set up their stands.

In order to set up the game and the booth efficiently, we needed everyone. We also never imagined that we would split up and enter the booth with an incomplete team.

Fortunately, the Americans being extremely kind and understanding, we were able to get the whole team in by explaining to the security guards that we were a team of six, and that we needed everyone to set up.

We were lucky on this one, but Pauline and Yann, the two who didn't have the famous blue tongue, couldn't get out of the building, and passed in front of the security again with their eyes wide open. We had to find another method.

Gary, who had a VIP badge that said Exhibitor too, took off his blue tab and stuck it on Pauline's badge. He went to the front desk to report that he had received a badge without a tab, and got a new one without any problem. Louis, who had the second VIP badge, did the same.

When you pass through security with your badges, the guards do not look for the name but simply for the presence of the strips and the colour of the badges, which change according to the price of the entrance ticket.

Once the security guards had passed, we only had to go down the big escalator to arrive in a huge space where the indie technicians and developers set up the stands without wasting time. The Alternative Controllers area is a very small area next to the areas dedicated to the giants of the industry such as Epic Game, Ubisoft and Unity.

When we get to the Alt. Ctrl. GDC (Alternative Controller GDC) area, large panels delimit the stand areas. We didn't know what to expect. During our e-mail exchanges, we asked for two screens, a table, chairs to sit on, sturdy chairs to jump on, and above all a space big enough for people to jump to reach the buttons. A space where people would just have to turn around to push the buttons would lose the spirit of the game.

We find our booth, and everything we asked for is there, except the dedicated space. The area of our booth is actually quite small. Enough for a fixed game, but not for a game where movement is paramount.

Part of the team is setting up the pillars, Sébastien is in charge of connecting his computer to the screens to display the game and start testing the button connections.

Little by little, the groups of the other Alternative Controllers arrive to install their game. This installation Monday is really the opportunity to discuss with the other groups, to see what they propose, and where they come from. Most of them come from the USA, but we came across a group of students from the Netherlands whose project was called Koo-Koo. In front of their stand was an empty space, which left more room for them. When they learned the concept of our game, they immediately

offered to exchange their booth with ours so they could let us organize and place our pillars as we wanted.

After changing places with Koo-Koo, we took over the installation of the stand. We had to finish assembling the pillars and wiring very quickly, so we could test the chairs and make sure everything would work as planned.

New problem, the wiring from the screen to the PC. One of the screens required a special cable to be connected to the computer.

Sebastian and Gary went to a Target (a supermarket brand) to look for the famous cable. They found an adapter, but it still didn't work.

So Sebastian went to see the GDC installers' booth, and had to post a deposit to get the right cable.

If you're missing equipment, you can report it to them, they'll do everything they can to help you out. However, if this equipment was not specified in your request list, the rental rate is extremely high. For example, to get a small table (really small) we would have had to pay a total of 300€ for the duration of the show. So be very careful when you order your equipment by e-mail with the organisers.

Once this cable problem was solved, we found out that the chairs intended for use by the players for three days were folding wooden chairs. If players are having fun jumping for several hours at a time on chairs that are not joined together as a single block, breakage may happen much faster than expected.

Above : *The whole team is busy assembling the pillars, while Sebastian is in charge of ensuring the connection with the game.*
Left : *Even the graphic designer has to do it!*

One of our big fears was the durability of the chairs. We couldn't take them on the plane with us, and once we got there, we didn't know what we were going to get. In the e-mail, we said that we needed strong, sturdy chairs that would last three days in a row under the weight of people. But nothing assured us of the quality of the product on arrival.

We went back to TARGET to see what kind of chairs we could find there: none seemed to really suit Tied Escape's barbarity. So we decided to try our luck once again and decided that the wooden ones would do the trick.
Our biggest problem on that first day was the construction of the wooden pillars. As we had received them only a few days before the start, we could not do any assembly tests.

We knew that the wood of the pillars was too light to withstand a kick and therefore to stay in one piece. So we took our precautions and took the famous grey construction site tape with us. With the help of the adhesive tape, we were able to reinforce the structure of the towers.

It was imperative that they could resist blows. So we tested in condition: sitting on a chair and kicking the buttons mounted on the tower. The second thing: the towers had to be able to stand upright after a blow.

To add weight to the base of the tower, we placed a large canister filled with water inside.

Monday goes by and we discover the stands being gradually set up. We had done some scouting, but the time is above all devoted to setting up the game, because Tuesday, the second day of installation, is in fact devoted to two things: continuing to set up the stand, but above all the passage of the jury.

This was one of the darkest points in our minds: How was the famous jury going? When was it going to happen? When were the results going to come in? In short, a lot of questions were adding to our stress. We stayed until 10pm at the Moscone Center to save as much time as possible on the installation.

Little story: after returning the HDMI adapter to Target, because it didn't allow our screen to work, we saw that the shop, very honestly, would take back any item purchased and refund us on our account, not with a credit note like we do in France. So when we needed another table, we went to buy one at Target, which would always have been cheaper than 300€. Then we gave it back on the last day of the convention.
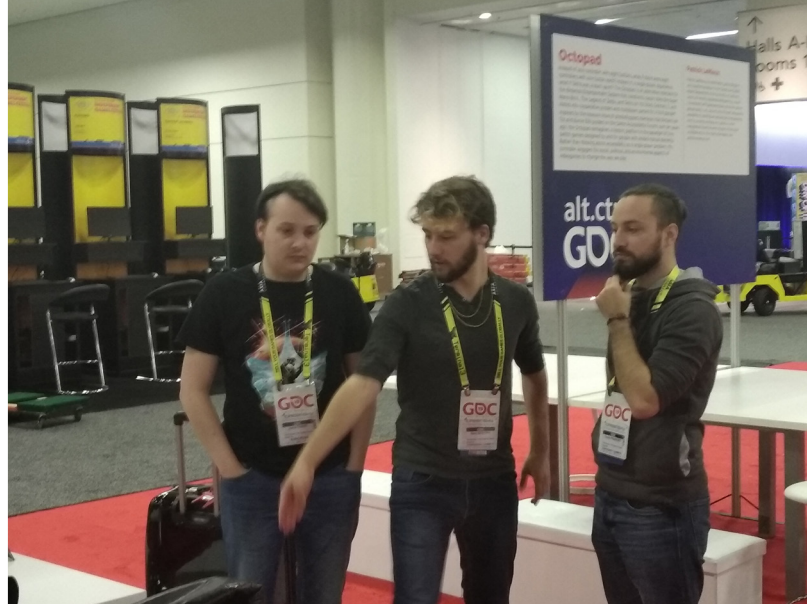
Previous Page : *The stand is almost finished, Louis attaches the last decorations of atmosphere.*
Above : *Gary gives instructions on how to set up the booth for the show.*
Left : *The installation is complete, and we're waiting for the jury to come in.*

It was the simplest and most efficient rental system we had improvised. Don't hesitate to use it if you're missing things from your booth.

On the second day, Tuesday, we got up a little more tense than the day before. The multiple discussions we had with the other Alternative Controller groups confirmed that the juries were passing the same day between 2pm and 6pm.

We had no idea how the jury would rate us, if we had to present our project in front of the other groups, if we were forbidden to touch the game from 2pm onwards. In short, we were in a blur that didn't reassure us.

During the installation period, or even during the rest of the show, it was very complicated to communicate with the organizers of the show, since they too were overwhelmed by the organization.

The whole show was held in three huge buildings, on several floors, and the booths of the big studios needed much more attention than those of the Alternative Controllers.

We arrived as soon as the Moscone Center opened, and immediately finished the final touches of decoration and assembly. Everything was in place, and in view of the little work that remained to be done, the majority of the team chose to take more breaks. The jet lag fatigue was present, but we had to keep at it, and we learned that at a very specific moment.

Always test your games, your equipment, test it and re-test it, there will never be one test too many! The jury was coming around 2pm, and, as it was supposed to be 12.30pm, we did the first test of the chairs. The famous wooden folding chairs we were so afraid of.

And we were right to fear them. Barely a minute into the test, and one of the chairs broke under the jumps and the weight of the testers. At that moment, Sebastian blushes with anger. For an hour he had been asking for tests, and the team was just saying "Don't worry, it's going to work". Always run tests!

Panic-stricken and angry, seeing the fateful schedule approaching, we decided to borrow two chairs from a conference area right next to our booth. The chairs were comfortable, had no arms, ideal for our game, and were joined together. The only problem was the thickness of the legs. They were made of metal, but very thin.

We had tested the chairs sold by TARGET, but that wouldn't have been enough, they too would have given way before the end of the show. That was our philosophy at the time: if it breaks, well, that's good for us. The whole point was to make it stick when the jury was going to test the game.

WHY IT DOESN'T WORK ?

Jury selection is the key moment of the week. It is at this precise moment that your game is considered for inclusion as a nominee at the FMI Awards Ceremony.

When the jury passes by to see the different projects, they do so one after the other, on each team's stand. The other groups can come to see the test as they can stay to polish up the details.

So we did a series of playtests of the game before the jury arrives. Pauline had taken this time to make small drawings representing the team members in adventurous situations like Indiana Jones. These drawings were, of course, intended for the juries.

The jury is made up of three people, including John Gavin Polson, the one who announced that we were selected for the GDC. When they arrived at our booth they were very intrigued. Professionals really like Alternative Controllers, it's a way to create digital interaction through different and sometimes unlikely ways, like jumping on two chairs for example.

First of all, the explanation of how the game works is attributed to Sebastian, who is the most qualified and at ease with speaking. He knew how to be clear and concise about a ready detail: he omitted to explain that the buttons were activated only with the feet.

It was so obvious to us, and that coupled with the stress, we forgot to explain the very basis of the game. It's a very common mistake that we're taught to avoid in the first year, and we think it's too stupid to make, and yet it happens.

So the jury was tied to the chairs, and when the instructions came out, they waited for the game to go around them, without even lifting a finger. The concept had confused them a bit, and having to jump on the chair to activate buttons can discourage many of them.

Seeing that the test was not conclusive, we didn't lose our cool and we asked them if they wanted to see us play. They smiled and said yes.

So Sebastian and Louis carried out the test. The chairs held, the victory over Cortez, and the jury laughed a lot when they saw the two of them jumping on their chairs. The concept had caught their eye once again.

Unfortunately, on Wednesday evening, during the IGF (Independent Game Festival) awards ceremony, we did not receive an award. Imagine going to the GDC to present your project in front of thousands of people for a week, and you're fully involved in it. Of course, you imagine yourself the best.

So we went back, taking stock of why it didn't work.

First of all, the jury, to whom we failed to explain certain rules. Even though this was later made up for, we were at a disadvantage in taking the game into our own hands. Its rather weak technology doesn't make it exceptional either. Also, the physical investment is huge, and it's something not everyone can afford, or just doesn't want to do.

In short, the game has potential, but is still a student project for fun. Our goal in going to GDC was to take advantage of this opportunity, and if there was a win, it would have been the pinnacle.

Ask yourself vividly why you are going: to win the convention, which involves a lot of investment, testing and more technology, or just to show off your work and meet various professionals in the field?

THE GDC

SURVIVING THREE DAYS OF CONVENTION

We are now entering the most exciting part of our journey: the GDC and its three full days of trade show. Thousands of enthusiasts and professionals from the four corners of the world will be on hand.

To survive such an intensive three days, get orgasmic, this is the most important thing to enjoy and be effective. For good reason, Tied Escape has been tested more than 150 times (that's 300 playtesters), without any worry about chairs, fortunately.

Wednesday is the first day for the public. Exhibitors can access the premises one hour before the opening to prepare their booth and start visiting the show. In general, no activities are really open before the opening to the public, but you can already meet many professionals.

On the first day, we didn't really have any organization in terms of stand rotation. We needed at least two people to run the game: one to take care of the computer and one to make

sure the pillars survived and install people.

We had previously organized our booth so that water bottles and cups were available for players on the small table purchased at theTarget. We knew the physical game and players didn't really realize that until they started a game. We had a lot of testers reacting the same way they did before starting a roller coaster: "Oh my god, why did I say Yes!?"

All the tests were done in a great atmosphere. People come to see our Ctrl projects. Alt. to relax and get away from the big studios. They like to test crazy things and Tied Escape has been one of the games that has been acclaimed by the public.

Many people flocked around the players, filming and hallucinating in front of such a crazy concept. We got a lot of comments like, "I want this at home!"

We also had our contact cards on the booth. Each member of the team had a good bunch of them printed out, because that's also why we're going there: to make you known and to make contacts in the industry.

A webcam was installed on the stand to film the players during the games. The videos were then sent to the players' various emails.

Thinking about the water bottles, offering a video feedback of this unique experience, and the game itself managed to create a cocktail that made us known on the show, to the point that a producer from Rockstar invited another producer from the same company to test the game.

It was Thursday, the second day of the convention, and we had set up the tower system in the booth surveillance. At that time, Pauline and Gary were in the booth. The two friends from Rockstar Games (GTA series) played and enjoyed the game immensely. As they were leaving to return to the show, Pauline caught up with them to ask for their contact information, and both were invited to a private party hosted by Rockstar with their names on the guest list.

The day before, Gary had already attended a private party on the roof of the Virgin Hotel with Louis, as they were the two who owned the GDC VIP tickets.

During GDC, many parties and events are organized by the studios, and all the top names in the gaming world are present during them. The only downside is that if you don't know anyone, you won't even hear about it.

Throughout the show, you will develop a kind of reflex that consists in looking at the badge of each person you meet. Producer at Rockstar, Lead Game Designer at Ubisoft, Creative Director at Nintendo, they're all there! And you're stuck at the very idea of saying hello to them. It's important to know that the pros come to GDC to meet people, see friends and test games.

They are here to enjoy three days of breaks and evenings. Don't hesitate to go and talk to them, they're eager to talk to you.

Previous Page : *The independant Game Festival, the big event of the GDC*
Below: *Pauline and Louis testing the Suiss Games RV.*

As we wanted to challenge our players, we set up a contest.

Sébastien had programmed a system that kept the best scores of the players. Thus, one of our screens continuously displayed the evolution of the players' best times. At the end of the day, we would send an email to the duo with the best time of the day and offer them a poster of the game, autographed by the whole team. The challenge was a great success.

During our three days of convention, we were able to test many games, play old retro games, meet many developers, especially those from the Swiss booth, who spoke French for the most part and invited us to share beers on their booth.

The Epic Games booth, however, was by far the best of all. It was huge, with "I Love Unreal" socks, t-shirts, Epic Games water bottles, beer, cookies, rodeo on Fortnite's piñata, and most importantly, test the exclusives in comfortable sofas.

A very large part of the GDC booths offer many goodies to keep you coming back and make memories of this unforgettable week. In the end, Gary will take home no less than fifteen t-shirts in his suitcases, despite Sebastian's reluctance as to the space available in his suitcases.

On Friday morning, the third day of the convention, we arrived an hour early as usual, but this time we left for the Substance booth. The team had met Pauline and Gary at the Rockstar party, and invited them to come along so they could give us t-shirts. Substance being a French studio, the contact was made by itself.

On the last day, GDC didn't close at 6pm, but at 4pm. Taken of course, Sebastian and Gary ran to the hotel to get the suitcases to put the game away. We were the last ones with the Koo-Koo team to leave, after several hours of tidying up and having a good time with our Dutch friends.

That same night, another party was planned for the Ctrl's. Alt. and we went there. We saw members of the Rockstar team again, who recognized us and spent the evening with us. We also played games with Alternate Controller with a Microsoft Hololens Engineer.
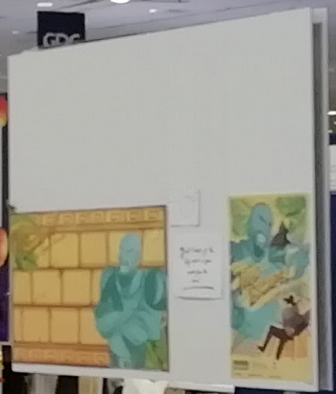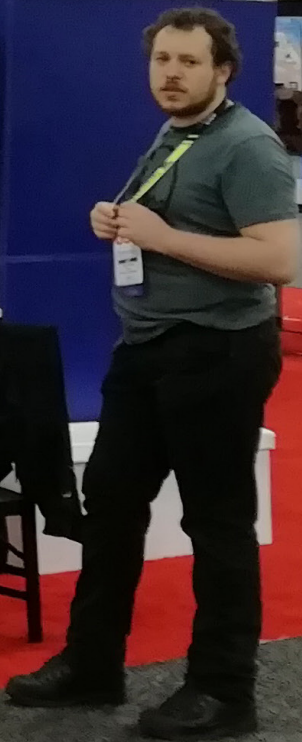
THE ESCAPE!

alt.ctrl.
GDC

Hall C →
Rooms 3-6

Tied Escape :
The Curse of Cortez

Tied Escape is characterized by simple instructions, but
constrained capacity of movements. The orders are simply
shown on a screen, but the buttons of the controller are
scattered around the room, and the players have to move
toward them hand in hand, while staying tied up on their
chair, creating a true experience of two captured individuals
trying to make the best of their situation.

Gary BOUTRY;
Sébastien BUTOR;
Louis PRUVOST;
Joris FABRE; Yann GOSSET;
Pauline SION

alt.ctrl.
GDC

Microsoft Game Stack. Achieve More.
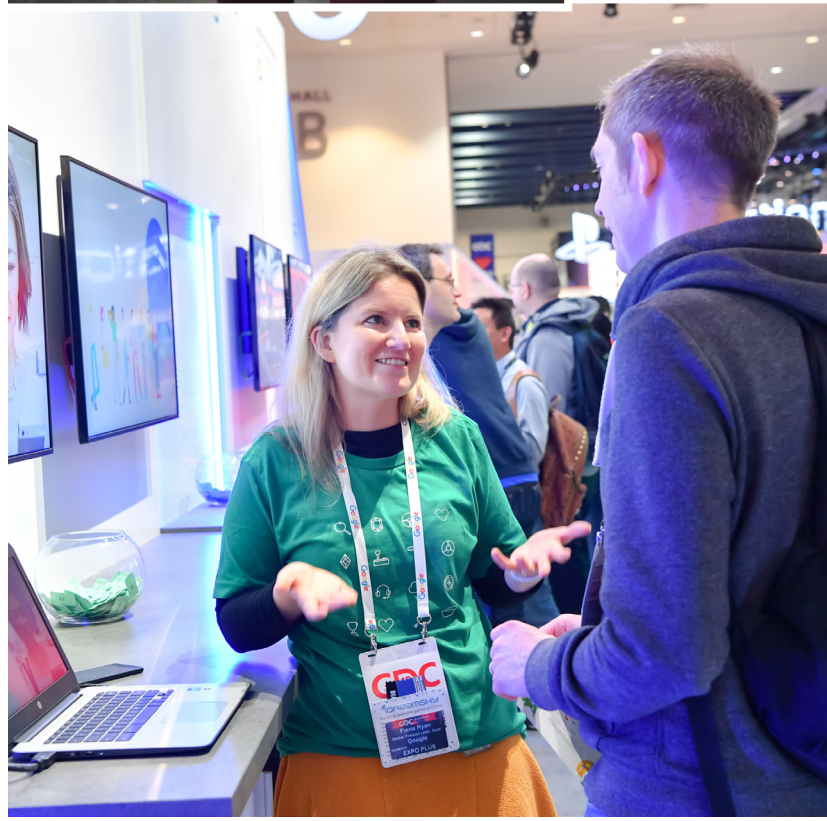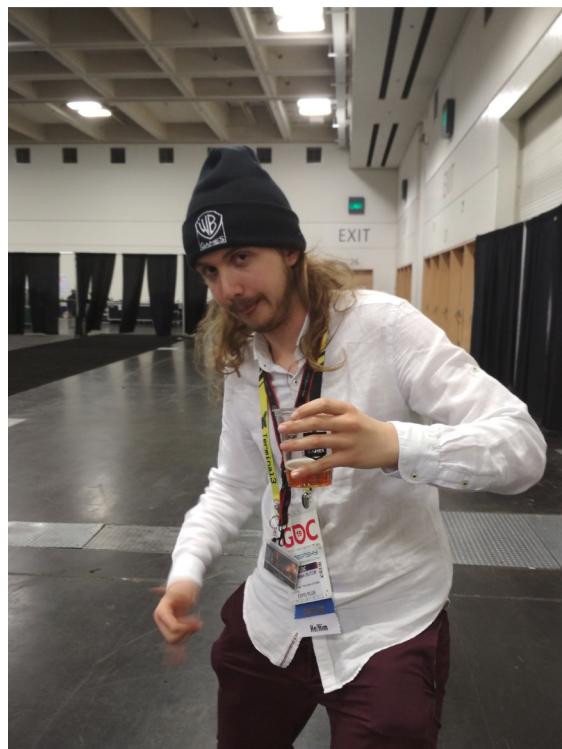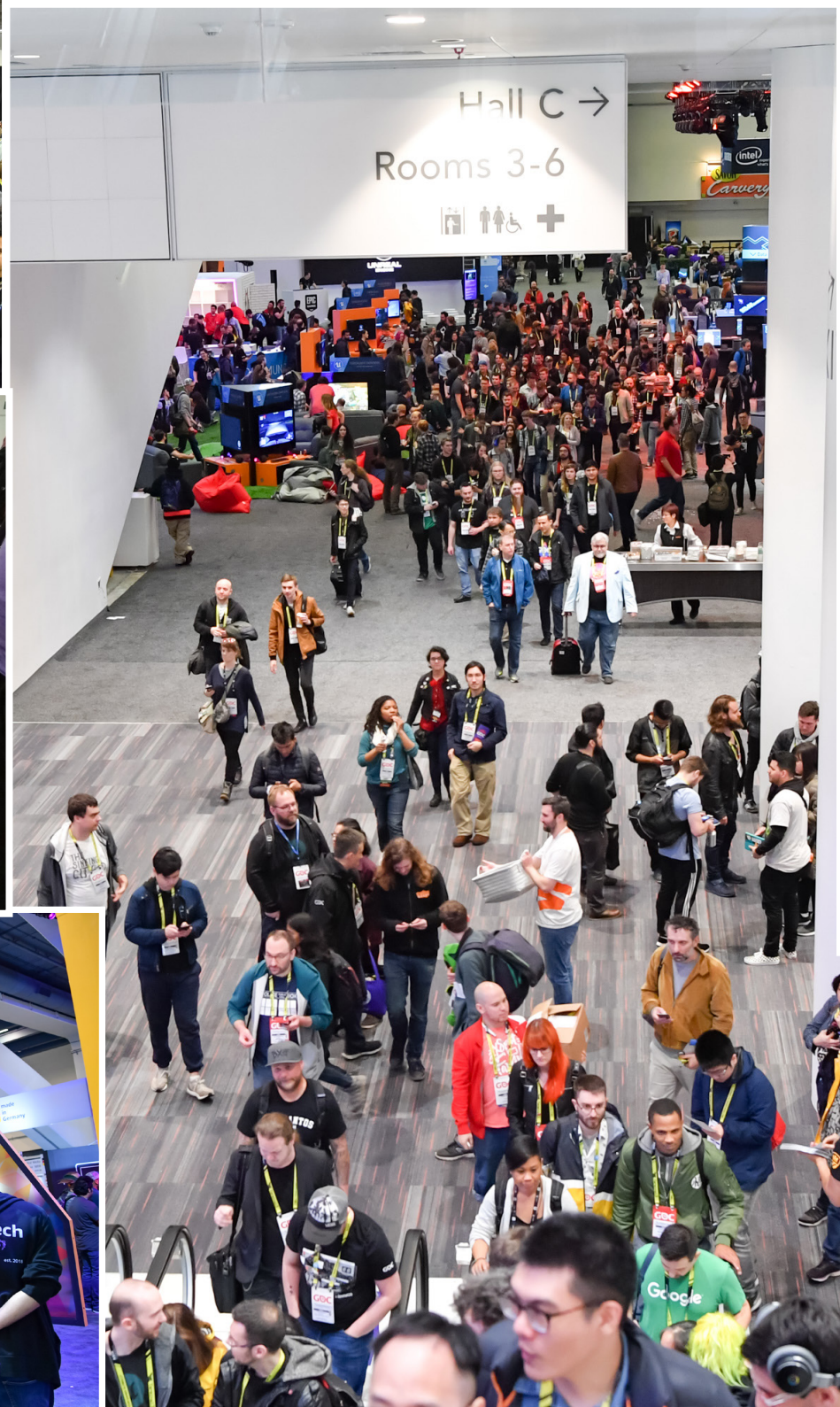
BACK TO FRANCE

Saturday, the day of departure, has arrived, and this is where our journey ends. But Tied Escape isn't quite finished yet...

After spending more than three days shouting the same instructions on how to play the game and having spent one party after another with the professionals, our voices no longer exist. We are enjoying this last day in San Francisco, the throat is sore but the sun is still shining.

Nous sommes revenus en France, et les parents de Sébastien sont venus nous chercher à l'aéroport Charles de Gaulle. Le décalage horaire nous a tenu pendant encore une semaine de plus.

We came back to France, and Sebastien's parents picked us up at Charles de Gaulle airport. The jet lag kept us going for another week.

So we prepared a conference with exchanges and anecdotes about our trip, our difficulties, our surprises... It is this same return that is made to you today through this album.

A few weeks go by, and just when we thought we were done with Tied Escape, the team receives an email from Taipei. We were invited to go to the Taipei Game Show 2020 in February. Our game had been spotted during the GDC event and had so much more that they wanted to show it at an Asian show.

Months go by and the details about the show increase. It was a new opportunity for us, but the show was not awarding any rewards, and we had to pay for the plane tickets to Taipei (Taiwan) ourselves.

It was also a question of rebuilding new pillars, rewiring the cables, and transporting everything through all of the world , but this time to the other side. And the team wasn't ready for that financially. So we chose not to accept their invitation, although we still have the satisfaction of having been invited as proof that we liked the game.

The last performance of Tied Escape took place in October 2019, during the Valenciennes Game Arena on the RUBIKA school stand.

Photo shooting representing the team during the conference given on the occasion of the return to France. Thanks to Axel Chatelain for the pictures.

AN INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY

GAME BREAKING NEWS

Latest game breaking news from around the world

Victoria Caña
@victoriacana

I did not expect to be tied to a chair with @YoniSkolnik and have to escape an Aztec temple trap Indiana Jones-style, but it happened and we made it out! Also, @DianeKang can finally be proud I cuffed my jeans 🤙🤟 #gdc

07:38 - 22 mars 2019

Sarah Sexton
@Saelia

"Our situation has not improved." #TiedEscape players must push several buttons while tied to chairs, creating an experience of 2 captured individuals trying to make the best of their situation. #GDC19 facebook.com/ATiedEscapeTea... alt.ctrl.GDC @GaryBOUTRY @ehgoodenough @WaitWhatNoStop

19:42 - 24 mars 2019

THANKS TO ALL OF YOU

This album was written during two long months in order to retranscribe our experience to the future students who wish to try the adventure, but also and above all to thank all our supporters, and to show them that their help was not in vain!

Thank you to all those who believed in us!

A big and enormous thank you to all our tippers, who so generously contributed to help us for our departure to the other side of the world. We didn't believe it, and yet, you are so many that we did it, thanks to you!

TIED ESCAPE! THE CURSE OF CORTEZ

THANKS TO

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Laeticia et Lionel NAUTON
Claire LABIGNE
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Philippe TESSON for his support, encouragement and friendship!

To the SIGH of Valenciennes for his financial help!

TIED' ESCAPE!

THE CURSE OF CORTEZ

TIED ESCAPE IS A STUDENT PROJECT THAT WAS SHOWN AT THE GDC IN SAN FRANCISCO IN 2019.

ORIGINALLY CREATED AS A SIMPLE GAME FOR A SCHOOL SETTING, THE GROUP TRIED THEIR LUCK AND WAS SELECTED FOR THE LARGEST TRADE SHOW FOR VIDEO GAME PROFESSIONALS.

THIS STUDENT PROJECT REQUIRED THE SETTING UP OF A PARTICIPATIVE FINANCING, THE SEARCH FOR SPONSORS AND ABOVE ALL THE CREATION OF AN EXPERIENCE FOR AN INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC.

THIS ALBUM RECOUNTS THE THREE MONTHS OF PREPARATION, AND THE ANECDOTES AND ADVICE, IF YOU TOO WANT TO TRY THE ADVENTURE ONE DAY!

RUBIKA
THE SCHOOL OF TALENTS IN
DIGITAL DESIGN & CREATION

SUPINFOGAME
RUBIKA