

Looped Play

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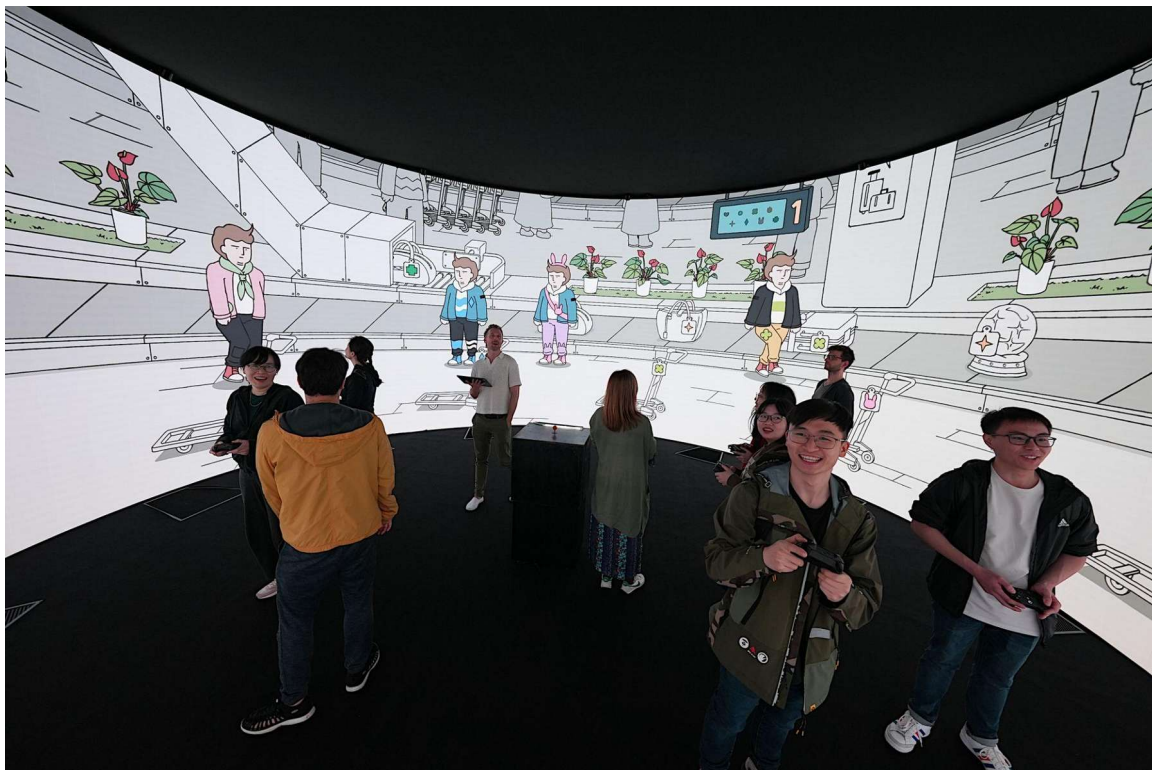
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Dr Peter A C Nelson, February, 2024

Following the proposal for multiplayer interactivity by Co-I Nelson in the Future Cinema project outline, *Looped Play* invited three artist teams to prototype multiplayer collaborative computer games for the 360 Visualisation Research Centre to investigate how the bonds created by play and social experience function within this immersive enclosed audiovisual environment. These games used the structure of the 360 cylindrical cinema as the primary theme, where the concept of loops, anamorphosis, group viewing/interaction and recursivity branched out into experimentations with [ilynx](#), spatial remappings, [strange loops](#), surround sound and surround play. Playing the role of game-master, inspired by Bernie De Koven's theories of 'playing well together', Nelson hosted 60 guests separated into groups of eight for 15-minute sessions. Before entering a play session, audience members were asked to pass one of eight themed flags to another guest whom they didn't know, marking which group of eight would have the next turn. Most guests returned for a second or third play session. Each 15-minute play session consisted of two games, typically starting with 'Ping' by Patrick LeMieux, Stephanie Boluk and Carlin Wing, then followed by either 'The Waiting Game' by Optillusion Games, or 'Mario Tag' by the Plunder Ludics Working Group. *Looped Play* was produced by Peter Nelson in collaboration with game designer and curator Yang Jing.



Documentation:

'Ping'

by Patrick LeMieux, Stephanie Boluk, and Carlin Wing



White rectangular paddles and a bright square ball glide across the black background in *Pong*, the iconic arcade game created by Al Alcorn in 1972. An evolutionary leap in the history of interactive entertainment, *Pong* epitomizes the simplicity and elegance of early electronic gaming experiences on television screens. Eyes glancing and fingers twitching, players pilot their rectangles to volley the square to and fro in this electronic rendition of table tennis. *Pong* was released the same year Nixon visited Beijing, the first official contact between the US and China after 25 years and a visit that was prompted by a chance encounter between Chinese and American ping pong players in 1971. Now prepare to dive into the special edition of *Pong*, or rather, *Ping*. Here, the conventional ping pong table stretches and twists again, not into the small square of the television set, but onto the massive ring of a 360-degree cinema. Now the familiar trajectory of the square bounces and blips off the floor and ceiling as players must rotate not only their joysticks but also their bodies and gaze, tracking the projectile's movement as it orbits around them. But where is Player 2? If you begin a volley, you are the only one who can return. Try your backhand! Not ping pong, but just ping, ping, *Ping* as the ring transforms into the Yellow Mountains, the landscape depicted on the silk scarf that Zhuang Zedong gave Glenn Cowan when the American ping pong player boarded the wrong bus at the 31st World Table Tennis Championship in 1971.



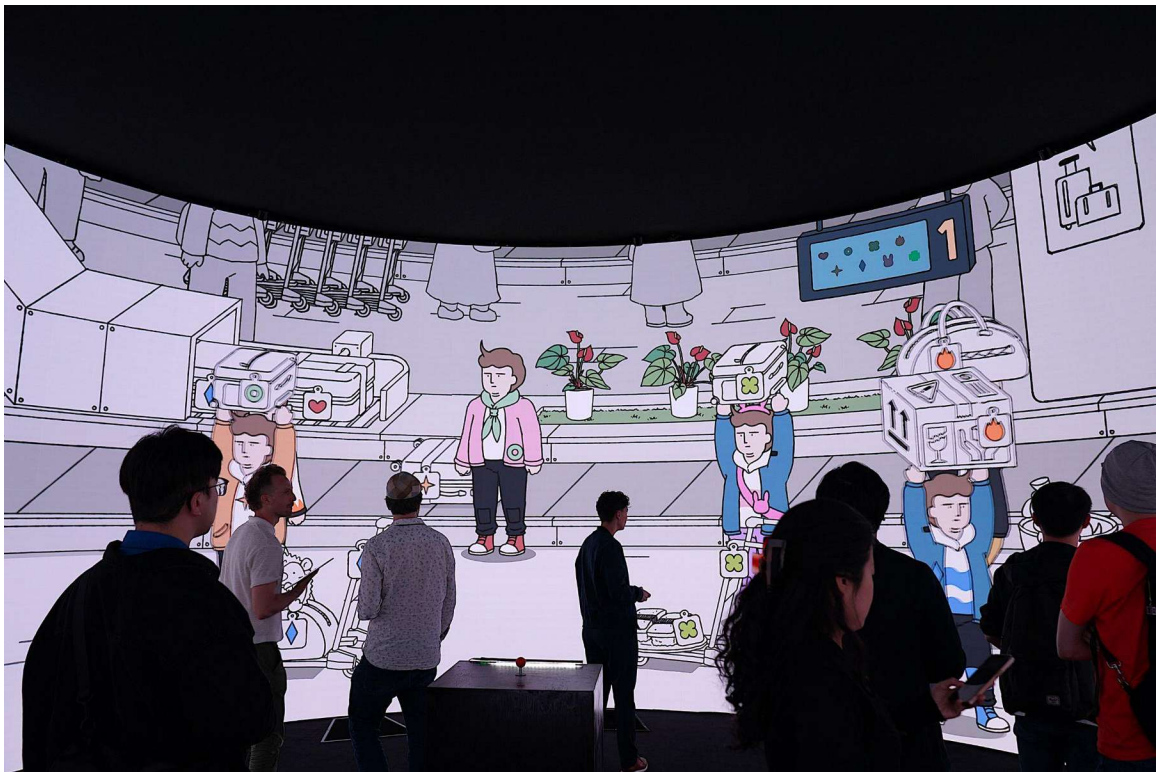
'The Waiting Game'

by Optillusion Games

Presented by the team behind the critically acclaimed "Moncage," "While Waiting" offers a unique and transformative adventure centered around the art of waiting. In this thought-provoking game, players are tasked with clearing over 100 waiting scenarios, spanning from birth to death, providing a comprehensive exploration of life's waiting moments. The key? Doing nothing.



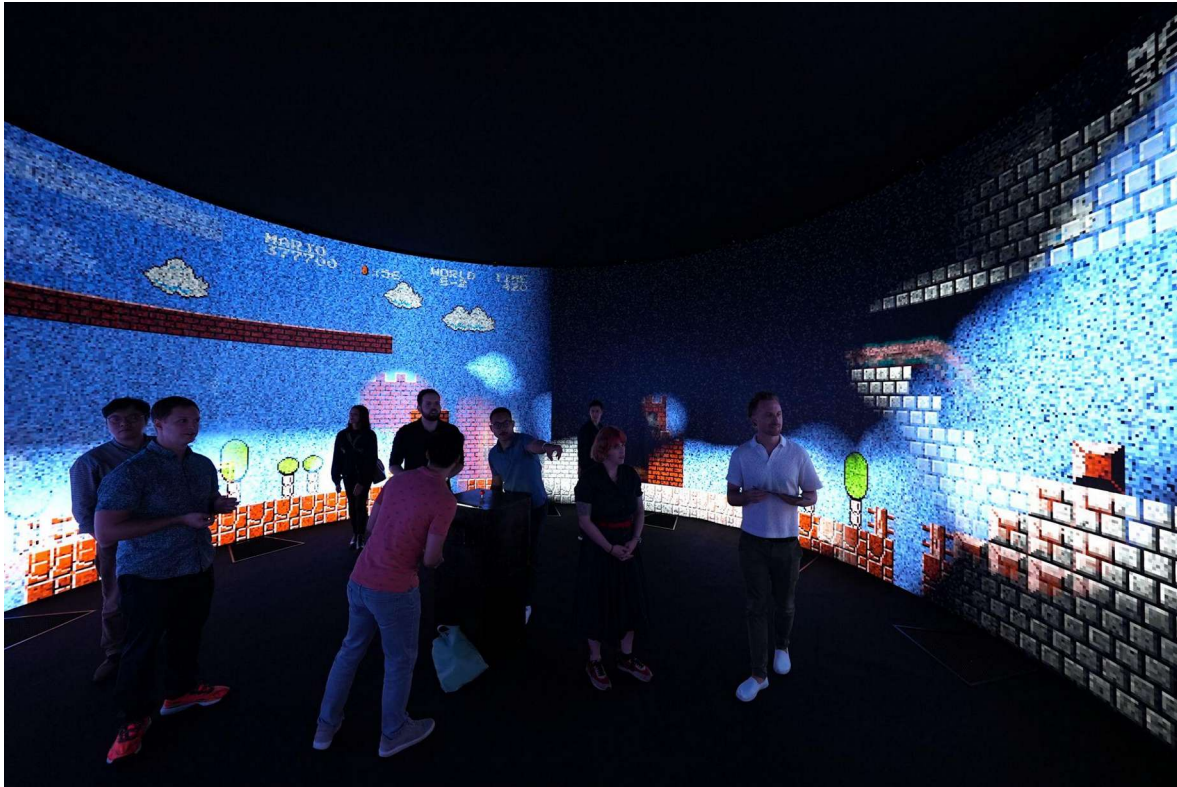
Now step into a whole new dimension of waiting with the special multiplayer version of "While Waiting." Join friends and strangers alike as you embark on a journey through life's waiting moments together. With the game extended to a long scroll format for the 360-degree cinema, you will find yourself engulfed in a truly immersive environment. Picture this: not only are you waiting alongside other players inside the virtual airport scene, but you're also standing back to back and shoulder to shoulder with them in the real space of the theater. Together, you'll learn the art of patience and acceptance, all while experiencing the profound aspects of life in a uniquely immersive setting.



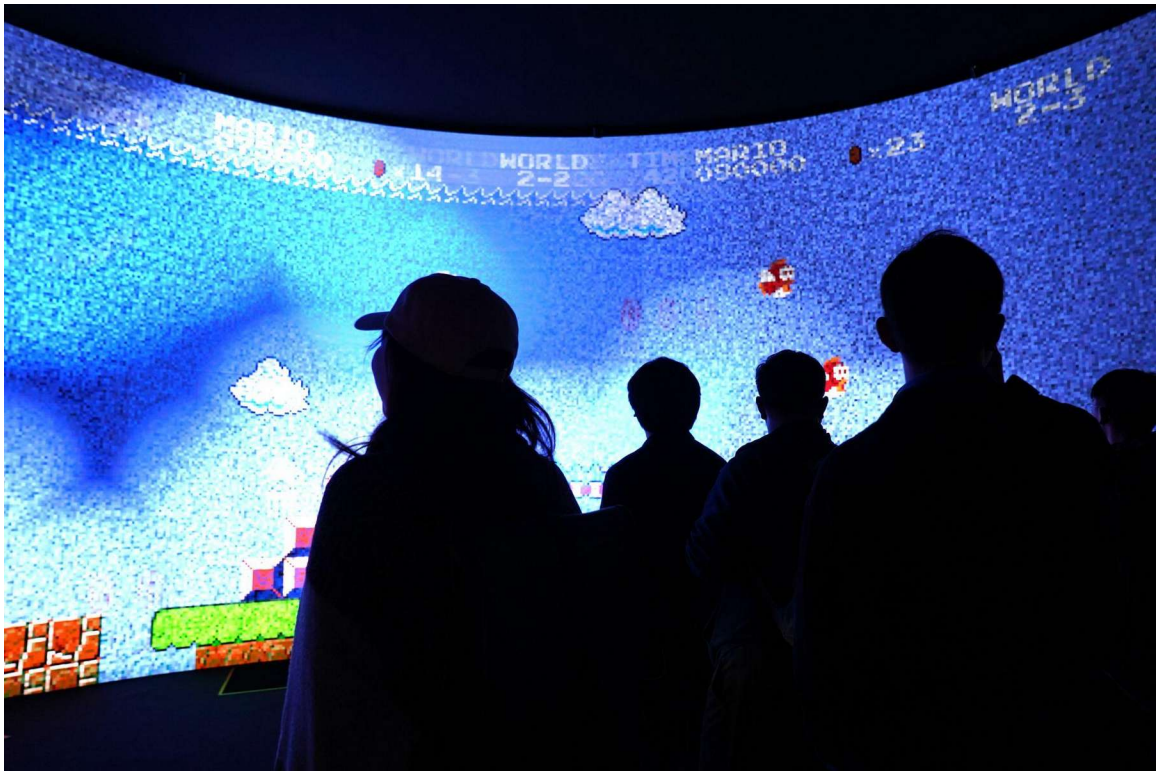
'Mario Tag'

by The Plunderludics Working Group

The Super Mario franchise, originating from Nintendo in 1985, is a seminal work in video game history. Set in the whimsical Mushroom Kingdom, players assume the role of Mario, joined by his brother Luigi, on quests to rescue Princess Peach from the clutches of Bowser. The game mechanics, featuring platforming challenges and strategic power-up items like the Super Mushroom and Fire Flower, offer a diverse and engaging experience. Its enduring popularity and scholarly interest make it a pivotal subject in the gaming industry.



"Mario Tag" is a fresh twist on Super Mario: Two players embody the iconic plumber, Mario, at the same time, engaging in an electrifying chase through the myriad levels of the Mushroom Kingdom. Adding to the excitement is the 360-degree screen, allowing the pursuit to unfold in both directions. Every time one player tags the other, the worlds morph randomly, injecting unpredictability into the gameplay. Experience the fusion of fun and innovation in "Mario Tag," where the pursuit never ceases!



Promotional Description:

What if Mario's world could expand infinitely, wrapping around you? What if the game screen was a 360-degree theatre? What if you were playing together on a circular ping-pong table, with games going around and around, connecting people in new and unexpected ways? This Friday, the Visualisation Research Centre at Hong Kong Baptist University invites you to Looped Play, where game makers and artists have made immersive works for you to play and enjoy together.



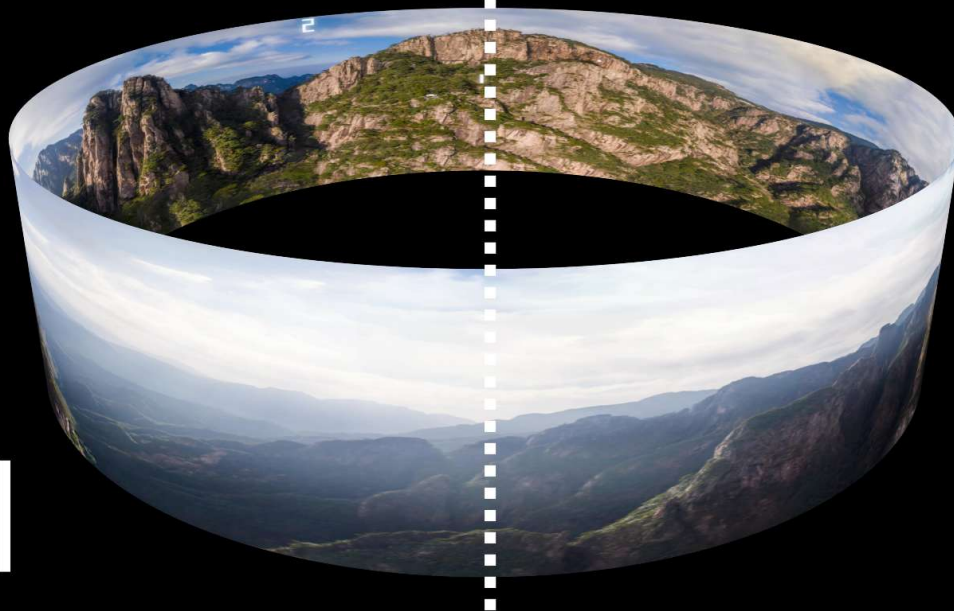
Promotional Poster designed by Peter Nelson

Ping

Patrick LeMieux, Stephanie Boluk & Carlin Wing

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Promotional poster designed by Peter Nelson

OPTILLUSION PRESENTS THE WAITING GAME



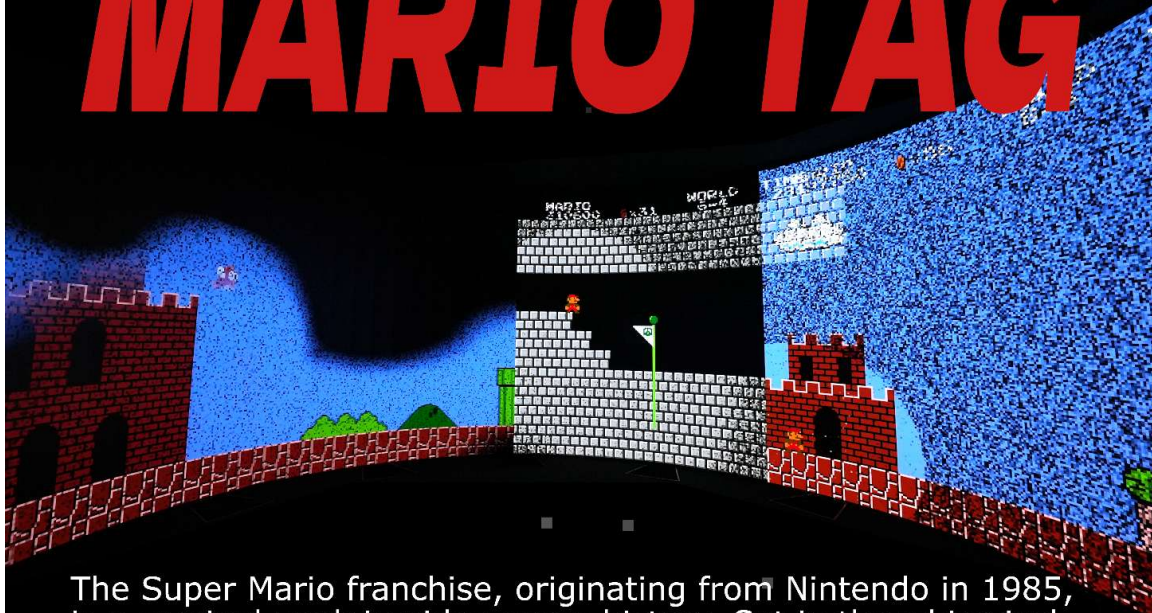
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Now step into a whole new dimension of waiting with the special multiplayer version of "While Waiting." Join friends and strangers alike as you embark on a journey through life's waiting moments together. With the game extended to a long scroll format for the 360-degree cinema, you will find yourself engulfed in a truly immersive environment. Picture this: not only are you waiting alongside other players inside the virtual airport scene, but you're also standing back to back and shoulder to shoulder with them in the real space of the theater. Together, you'll learn the art of patience and acceptance, all while experiencing the profound aspects of life in a uniquely immersive setting.

Promotional poster designed by Peter Nelson

**PLUNDERLUDICS WORKING
GROUP PRESENTS:**

MARIO TAG



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Exploring techniques the artists call "plunderludics," "Mario Tag" is a remix of sorts. By creating a custom emulator that changes how the original game is presented, while keeping the software untouched, "Mario Tag" is a fresh twist on Super Mario Bros: two players embody the iconic plumber, Mario, at the same time, engaging in an electrifying chase through different levels of the Mushroom Kingdom. Adding to the excitement is the 360-degree screen, allowing the pursuit to extend indefinitely. Each time a player dies, the world morphs randomly, injecting unpredictability into the gameplay. The competing Marios try to hold on to a 'ball' for the longest amount of time to win. Experience the fusion of fun and innovation in "Mario Tag," where the pursuit never ceases!

Promotional poster designed by Peter Nelson

Event 1: Participant Survey Analysis

Participants overwhelmingly reported a positive experience, with ratings ranging from 7 to 10 out of 10, indicating high levels of enjoyment and satisfaction. They found the interactive nature of the games engaging, particularly enjoying the opportunity to interact with others and collaborate in gameplay. The presence of other players enhanced the social atmosphere, fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared experience. Despite variations in individual perceptions of time during gameplay, the overall consensus was that the immersive environment of the 360-degree cinema added to the enjoyment of the experience. Suggestions for improvement focused on enhancing game variety, exploring gamification and theatrical elements, and incorporating real environmental elements to further enhance immersion.

"I love that everyone seemed to move in sync to give precedence to the comfort of the person on the console. Everyone naturally wanted to share and give everyone a chance to play"

"It was exciting. Like you have teammates and youre playing a team sport. The shared space that was still somewhat enclosed felt immersive and bonding."

"it definitely enhances the experience, as we could be interactive with other players, allow us to collaborate and play together."

"I felt a sense of connection when playing the waiting game when eight players help each other complete their tasks."

"While playing the baggage claim game, I realized that it was not just about moving luggage around; it was actually to foster connections with other players. when they assisted me in placing my luggage in the cart or taking it away from the cart."

1. Overall Experience (Question 1): *On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your overall experience at the event featuring computer games in the 360-degree cinema?*

Most respondents rated their overall experience highly, with ratings ranging from 7 to 10 out of 10.

2. Favorite Game and Reasons (Question 2): *Which game did you enjoy the most, and why?*

The most favored game was "Ping", appreciated for its simplicity and ability to break the ice with strangers. "Mario" and "Pong" were also mentioned for their engaging dynamics and collaborative elements.

3. Interaction with Others (Question 3): *Did you find yourself interacting with other audience members during gameplay? If so, how would you describe these interactions?*

Respondents generally reported interacting with other audience members during gameplay, with descriptions ranging from cooperative and friendly to fun and engaging.

4. Influence of Other Players (Question 4): *How did the presence of other*

players influence your experience of the games?

The presence of other players generally enhanced the gaming experience, with responses indicating that it made gameplay more social, immersive, and exciting.

- 5. Time Perception (Question 5): *How did your sense of time during gameplay in the 360-degree cinema compare to your usual perception of time during traditional gaming experiences?***

Responses regarding the sense of time during gameplay varied, with ratings ranging from 5 to 10 out of 10. Respondents mentioned that gameplay felt immersive and engaging.

- 6. Autonomy in Gameplay (Question 6): *When playing the games, did you feel like you were just going along with what you were told, or were you playing out of your own curiosity and exploration? Additionally, did you find yourself mainly following instructions or figuring things out for yourself?***

Responses regarding autonomy and exploration in gameplay were generally positive, with most respondents indicating that they felt a sense of curiosity and exploration while playing the games.

- 7. Memorable Social Moments (Question 7): *Can you recall a specific moment during gameplay where you felt a sense of connection or camaraderie with others? Please describe the experience.***

Respondents recalled various moments of connection and camaraderie during gameplay, such as cheering for each other, helping without being asked, and feeling a sense of relief or disappointment collectively.

- 8. Interest in Playing Again (Question 8): *Would you be interested in playing these games again in a similar setting? Why or why not?***

Most respondents expressed interest in playing the games again in a similar setting, citing reasons such as fun, novelty, immersion, and potential for exploration.

- 9. Comparison to Traditional Gaming (Question 9): *How does the experience of playing games in the 360-degree cinema compare to traditional gaming experiences for you?***

The experience of playing games in the 360-degree cinema was generally perceived as more immersive, social, and novel compared to traditional gaming experiences.

- 10. Suggestions for Improvement (Question 10): *What improvements or additions would you suggest for future events featuring computer games in the 360-degree cinema?***

Suggestions for future events included incorporating more complex games, allowing for longer playing sessions, and integrating real environmental sounds and lighting for a more immersive atmosphere.