The Elements of Variety
as studied through the design of a community learning center.

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Each new program carries a set of inherent issues which must influence the choice, exploration and manifestation of a thesis. Some issues contributing to design include questions of the physical and social site as well as of the particular programme.

Distinctions within design are frequently linked to social or political arrangements, creating a diagram from which architectural issues are later distilled. A tectonic exploration which remains between these diagramatic parameters allows the thesis to unfold without eliminating the original, visceral intentions.

The Richmond Community Learning Center was a competition project which became the vehicle for the study of a thesis. The ideas engendered by the conceptualized requirements of the proposed inhabitants led me to uncover a clear, essential question which I was able to examine at every level of the work.
A school must be a place of discovery for children. Two models hold qualities important to this preliminary concept: the attic and the monkey bars. The attic offers many boxes to be opened and corners and recesses to be explored. While the attic embodies cerebral pursuits the monkey bars are the framework for physical discoveries. The child challenges gravity from these heights and gains a new perspective.

This is the place where the child learns about what has come before and chooses what to take with him.
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What are the elements of variety?

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A variable presents a constant agency which is not contrasted to measures. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a sustainable regional condition under circumstances like this.
A variable presumes a constant against which it can be contrasted or measured, therefore it is necessary to establish or illuminate a typical condition before exceptions can be made.
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Architecture can create order and underline differentiation within it. Sometimes this happens when it is measured against nature or what is presupposed by man. However, it also happens when an object is constructed balanced against our ability to envision what our minds can imagine.
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The armature of a structural framework allows for a myriad of possible relationships between itself and the forms and planes which occupy it.
While the columns and chambers are positioned at regular intervals the interstitial spaces defend their domain from the encroachment of the contracting and expanding of the columns.
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Minimized support in the student wing challenges gravity.
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Massive foundations ground the community wing, offering stability rather than challenges.
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The external path marks the difference between topography and building.
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The internal path is formed by that which is and that which is not. It is influenced by the interactions between the manifolds which surround, move into and retreat from it.
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Material choices for the panels in the enclosing armature allow changes in the degree of admission of light and view while maintaining a readable organization. The inverse relationship of substance to absence preserves the organizational presence of the framework while changing its physical manifestation.

The cubic form of the chambers house diverse opportunities. This enclosing form remains intact while it is altered by the subtraction and addition (or extrusion) of substance. The form is the unifying element against which variety is measured.
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to **Mike** for his generosity and encouragement.

to **Mom** for her long distance “mothering” sessions.

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