7. LIGHT PROJECT, version 2 (In this class we are trying to expand your options in terms of the possible subjects for your painting and the options for developing formats appropriate to those subjects. This (the light paintings project) is a good model to consider when developing your own ideas.

Paintings are always a combination of form/formal qualities and content/concepts. So far this semester, we have focused on refining form (the HOW)—we have worked from different technical beginnings: value sketch, focused palette, inventive technique. We are working, now, from an alternative material in hopes of coming up with content/concepts generated from that new form. The alternative format project is a “bridge” project that moves us from strictly “HOW” to experimenting with HOW and What in tandem. Next, we will start from “the other end of the equation,” from the WHAT. For the Light Project, we will start from content/concept and develop an appropriate format for conveying this concept. In the end, one hopes for a perfect union of form and content.

Basically for this project you will consider the varied meanings of the definition of the word light and create at least two paintings that interpret one or more of those meanings.

Deceptively simple as an initial concept, the varied forms and meanings of the word light provide rich material for painterly exploration. As either a noun, a verb or as an adjective, light can be an object, an action or/ and a modifier. Your paintings, too, can be about very simple "things" (content/subject). But the way you modify those “things”-- through the process, action and form of your painting; through the "adjectives" you create for your subject--takes your work beyond the mundane to be a significant visual statement.

Consider carefully all the possible meanings and implications of light. Consider the potential poetics of some of the definitions of light: "having little weight" (read Unbearable Lightness of Being by Kundera); "a thing by means of which something can be started burning"—passion, or an incendiary comment. Consider the potential paradoxes between some interpretations of light. For example, the paradox between light as a spiritual metaphor/positive force and as a destructive potential (to light a fire)—consider the recent tragedy of the church burnings, and the World Trade Center disaster: in both cases passion and religious fervor led to destructive fires. Working from the definitions of light, can you brainstorm a list of ideas/concepts for painting subjects?

Then, you need to think about how light works in the format of your painting. How do you use light in a formal way so that it impacts and enhances the reading of the subject of your painting AND serves as the subject itself?? In your painting could you use light as a metaphor, as a role in a narrative, as a subjective, expressive element? Could you combine several aspects of light into one painting? For example--you choose to focus on light as a spiritual metaphor (content) and use the image of a lighted candle (subject) in a painting that
employs Chiaroscuro (format) as a stylistic technique to enhance the drama and impact of your content. Could you work with light on a more conceptual level--marking the pattern of light as it moves across a landscape, for instance?

Use your How, What, Why sheet to expand your thinking about ways to approach these paintings. How will you structure these paintings--what style, what role will the paint and imagery play? How do these support your content/concept?