The American Art Therapy Association Ethics Committee provides this series of “best practice” papers as non-binding guidelines to help art therapists interpret and apply the Ethical Principles for Art Therapists.

Informed Consent:
Documenting, Presenting and Exhibiting Artwork by Research Participants

"9.6 Artwork created by research participants as a part of a research study belongs to the research participants, unless otherwise specified through the research study informed consent document."

"9.7 Art therapy researchers fulfill federal, state and institutional laws and regulations that pertain to the duration and location of retaining raw data. Original artwork and/or digital photographs of participant artwork are de-identified and securely stored... Any artwork and/or photographs of artwork may be saved indefinitely for potential use in future research, presentations, publications and related educational forums, as specified in the informed consent document."

Art therapy researchers are required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) governing their study to provide an Informed Consent to research participants (Kapitan, 2010). Researchers should follow the overall structure, compulsory content areas, and required language of the IRB. As there are additional considerations for artwork, art therapist researchers need to specify that art making is part of the procedures and how the art produced will be stored. The following provides requirements and sample language:

- **Procedures**: Indicate research participants will be asked to create art and state how the art will be documented.
  
  **SAMPLE**: You will create art…The researchers will (retain your original artwork)/(take digital photos) for further analysis and evaluation.

- **Confidentiality**: Explain how confidentiality of artwork will be maintained in both data storage and when presented in reports, presentations, and publications.
  
  **SAMPLE**: Your artwork will be stored and identified by an alpha-numeric code…If your artwork could identify you, it will be obscured or cropped to ensure your anonymity.

- **Request for Return of Artwork (if applicable)**: Provide opportunity to retain art.
  
  **SAMPLE**: Please send my original artwork created (circle one): Yes  No
  
  Address of Where to Send Artwork:

- **Documentation of Consent**: Re-affirm understanding at signature line.
  
  **SAMPLE**: I give my permission to allow photographs of my art and direct quotations from my reflective writing/interview transcript to be used for educational presentations and scholarly publications.

References: