As spectators, most of us are trained to look at art and ask, what do I see? But as a form of language, art can become reflexive, turn on itself, invite us to question our own premises, to ask, how do I see? What can I know? How do I know what I know? Then, art becomes a process and form of inquiry. Art can be representational, but it also can be evocative, embodied, sensual, and emotional; art can be viewed as an object or a product, but it also is an idea, a process, a way of knowing, a manner of speaking, an encounter with Others; art can reveal an artist’s perceptions and feelings, but it also can be used to recognize one’s own.

(Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 508)

Arts-based research is an active and potentially enriching form of inquiry for preservice teachers doing action research. As the quote from Bochner and Ellis suggests, such research becomes a process of meaning making that actively moves the teacher/researcher from comfortable places of being and knowing into new spaces of discovery and questions. This represents the kind of becoming or acquisition of teacher identity that is the theme of BTAR. Springgay and Irwing (2005) describe “a/r/tography” as “living inquiry” (p. 209):

Artists, researchers, teachers engaged in a/r/tography are living lives of inquiry:

Lives full of curiosity punctuated by questions searching for deeper understandings while interrogating assumptions. Asking oneself questions that linger between, amid, and/or within visual/textual, theoretical/analytical, and pedagogical/curricular matters is to live a life committed to inquiry, active engagement, and dis/comfort.

(Bochner & Ellis, 2003, p. 508)
Again, this quote represents the message of *BTAR*: becoming a teacher is a lifelong pursuit of living a life of inquiry. What these authors suggest is the use of art and performance-based inquiry can open up possibilities that might otherwise be unknown for students engaged in more traditional forms of writing. Art can be both the process of research and the presentation of research.

*BTAR* attempts to encourage researchers to engage in some of these processes. However, neither the text nor this additional resource is a comprehensive guide to art- and performance-based forms of research; they merely introduce the topic. If you are curious to learn more, here are a few classic places where you might begin your inquiry:


The focus of this brief guide is on creating performance and art-based presentations as a way of sharing or publishing what you have learned as a preservice teacher action researcher.

**Getting Started**

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Art-based representations are not acceptable in all teacher education programs. Your first step, if you are interested in this form of going public, is to check with your program advisor.

Next, spend time considering the following questions:

- Why do you want to present your research through performance or art?
- What do you think you can communicate through performance and art that you could not communicate through text alone? How might you combine text and art to create a deeper representation of what you have learned as a teacher/researcher?
- Articulate clearly the purpose of the art presentation. What do you hope to accomplish? What questions do you want to present? What dilemmas do you hope to highlight? What processes, interactions, and challenges do you want to share? What is the theme of your art presentation?
- What kind of performance or art form do you wish to use? Why is this form of art uniquely able to best present your research?
- Do you have permission as needed to use photos or videos to create an art-based presentation?

Presenting your work as performance or art is not a substitute for lack of data, a connection to distant colleagues, and a strong theoretical framework. Your artistic product must still have its roots buried in the experience and data of the classroom, and the research literature. It is just as critical that you spend time completing final data interpretation, establish themes and questions, and know the focus of your presentation.

Possible Options

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The options are endless! We assume you have some special interest in an art form or you probably would not be reading this. So, follow your own passion in representing your action research! Here are some forms we have seen used powerfully:

*Video*: iMovie, Final Cut, and other digital video editors are relatively easy to learn programs that can have sophisticated results. Use photographs and videos, along with carefully selected music, voices from the classroom, photos of artifacts, and other documentation to bring together a powerful presentation of your journey in becoming a teacher. Focus and organize your work using storyboarding or other such techniques.

*Performance Ethnographies*: Performance Ethnographies use raw data (researcher’s notes and journals, ethnographic data, and other documents) to work through a critical question. Autoethnographies focus on the journey of the researcher (Bochner & Ellis, 2002). In such a performance, you as the teacher/action researcher act out the ethnography of becoming a teacher.

*Illustrative Forms*: Drawing, painting, digital creation, photography and sculpture are all possibilities. Graphic representations can communicate both journey and meaningful results in powerful ways.

*Poetic Forms*: Your research may be presented through a series of poems or narrative works such as short stories, short descriptive pieces woven together around themes, readers’ theater, or even as fiction.

**Attention to Trustworthiness**

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Whatever kind of art representation you choose, you must still attend to matters of trustworthiness. Draft your ideas; play with them; and check them against the trustworthiness criteria in *BTAR* Chapter 4.

**References Cited**
