

## **Interview with Elif Hanım, Exhibition & Operations Coordinator — ABC Art Gallery**

Interviewer: Elif Hanım, thank you for taking the time. Could you start by introducing yourself and how you came to work here?

Elif: Of course. I've been with ABC Art Gallery for nearly seven years now. My background is in museum studies. Before joining this gallery, I worked briefly at a state museum, mostly handling documentation and insurance forms for traveling exhibitions. At ABC, I handle the coordination of exhibitions, which sounds simple but involves a bit of everything—from unpacking artworks to managing database entries. It's a small team, so everyone does a lot.

Interviewer: Could you describe how the gallery operates in general, from your point of view?

Elif: We're a small independent gallery, so the structure is flat. We have Can Bey, who defines the curatorial direction, and then there's Kerem handling communications and auctions. I manage everything that connects the concept to the physical space—like a bridge between the curatorial idea and what visitors actually see.

Most of my time goes into planning exhibition schedules, receiving artworks, documenting their conditions, and coordinating with artists. During installation weeks, I also work closely with technicians, lighting people, and sometimes even photographers who document the setup.

Each exhibition lasts about six to eight weeks, so the pace is constant. While one show is running, the next one is already in preparation.

Interviewer: When you say “documenting artworks,” what does that involve exactly?

Elif: We have a system—well, it's not really a big system, more like structured folders and spreadsheets. Each incoming piece gets an object entry form with details like title, artist, medium, size, and insurance value. We also note its condition upon arrival. There's another form for installation details—placement, lighting, wall color, that sort of thing.

Those forms later become part of the exhibition record, which we call an Exhibition Dossier. It includes photos, condition reports, and artist correspondence. Sometimes Can Bey adds his own notes about curatorial arrangement, but those are more conceptual than technical.

Interviewer: Do these dossiers connect to Kerem Bey's communication records?

Elif: Yes, in a way. When the exhibition is confirmed, I share a summary sheet with Kerem that lists artwork titles, artists, and key visuals. He uses that for press materials and the website. He also sends me updates about public events or press visits, which I add to the record later.

We try to keep the data synchronized, but since we're not using a central database yet, we still do it manually. Sometimes the filenames don't match, and we have to double-check.

Interviewer: How do you handle coordination during auctions? Kerem mentioned that he receives some files from you.

Elif: That's right. When we prepare for an auction, we review which artworks are available—either unsold pieces from past exhibitions or works consigned directly for sale. I provide Kerem with what we call a Lot Summary Sheet. It includes artwork title, artist name, lot number, starting bid, and some condition notes.

But the financial details, such as reserve prices or commissions, are kept in a separate document. Those are stored on a restricted drive. Kerem only needs the public-facing information for bidders and marketing materials.

Interviewer: So you maintain several kinds of records. Could you list some of the main ones?

Elif: Let's see... we have Object Entry Forms, Condition Reports, Exhibition Dossiers, Loan Agreements for borrowed works, Artist Contracts, Insurance Certificates, Lot Summary Sheets for auctions, and Installation Plans.

Each one has its own subfolder and sometimes cross-references others. For instance, the Loan Agreement might refer to the Condition Report ID instead of repeating all the data. It keeps the paperwork lighter, though sometimes harder to follow for new staff.

Interviewer: That's interesting. Do you handle visitor statistics as well, or is that Kerem's side?

Elif: Mostly Kerem's side. He manages visitor sign-ins and mailing lists. But I sometimes use his reports when I prepare the Exhibition Evaluation Sheet. That's a kind of summary report we file at the end of each show—attendance, sales, feedback, and logistical notes. So I pull his data for attendance counts and merge it with installation notes and deinstallation costs.

Interviewer: Do you keep digital backups of these records, or are they mostly physical?

Elif: Both. The originals—especially condition reports—are signed on paper and stored in binders. But we scan everything into PDFs for safety. The PDFs are kept on the shared drive. We used to keep them on a portable disk, but after one crash we switched to a cloud folder. Still, access levels differ: Can Bey has everything, Kerem has communication-related folders, and I manage the technical and legal parts.

Interviewer: Earlier Kerem mentioned that he sometimes gets “a file with reference numbers” from you. What are those references exactly?

Elif: Oh, those are our internal codes for artworks. Every piece gets a short code when it enters the gallery. It's based on the artist's initials and an incremental number. For example, MY-014 would be Murat Yılmaz's 14th piece we've received. These codes help us link images, forms, and contracts. I guess that's what Kerem sees in his files—he uses them in captions and listings.

Interviewer: Do you generate those codes yourself?

Elif: Yes, I do, but the pattern was created by Can Bey years ago. I just keep following it. It's simple but effective.

Interviewer: You mentioned insurance certificates earlier—are they connected to any other documents?

Elif: They're connected indirectly. The insurance form refers to the Object Entry Form ID and the Loan Agreement ID. But we don't merge them; we just cross-reference by number. That way, when something happens—say, a frame gets damaged—we can trace all related files.

Interviewer: Do you ever use these records for analysis or reports beyond the exhibition itself?

Elif: Occasionally. We sometimes prepare an internal Year-End Summary that lists the number of artworks exhibited, borrowed, or sold. But it's mostly descriptive—how many paintings, how many sculptures. We haven't yet automated anything.

Interviewer: Has there been discussion about creating a shared database for all this information?

Elif: Many times! (laughs) We talk about it almost every season. It's hard because we don't have dedicated IT support. Every exhibition feels like its own mini-project, so we adapt the structure a bit each time. I think we'd benefit from a central database, but we'd need a system that doesn't feel too technical for the artists.

Interviewer: From what I understand, Kerem updates the mailing lists and visitor records, while you maintain the exhibition and object records. Is there any overlap in your data?

Elif: A small one. We both record exhibition titles and opening dates, but for different purposes. My files are about logistics, his are about outreach. I might note the delivery date of a sculpture; he'll note the date it appears in the newsletter. So same exhibition, different layers of documentation.

Interviewer: When you exchange data, do you use any common identifiers, like exhibition codes?

Elif: Yes, each exhibition has a short code—something like EXH-2025-03. That's the third exhibition of 2025. We use it in filenames, emails, and internal notes. But sometimes Kerem shortens it to just "Spring Show" in public materials. That can make cross-checking tricky.

Interviewer: Do you ever review or approve his mailing lists?

Elif: Only for consistency. I check if the artwork titles and artist names match the official list. The actual recipient data I don't touch—that's privacy-sensitive.

Interviewer: How about financial data, like artist payments or sale proceeds—do they appear in your system?

Elif: Not directly. I only see the delivery and return side, not the financials. When an artwork is sold, I receive a note marked "SOLD" with the buyer code, but not the price. That's Can Bey's and the accountant's domain.

Interviewer: Speaking of which, how closely do you work with Can Bey during a typical exhibition?

Elif: Very closely, especially at the beginning and end. We discuss layout, installation order, and insurance deadlines. During the exhibition, he's mostly focused on artist relations and media interviews, while I handle day-to-day logistics.

Interviewer: Is there a document or record you prepare specifically for him?

Elif: Yes, I prepare a Daily Log Sheet summarizing deliveries, setup progress, and any incidents—like humidity changes or late shipments. He reads it in the evenings and adds comments sometimes. It's not formal, more like a working journal.

Interviewer: Do you keep any digital timeline of when things happen—like delivery dates, opening day, dismantling, etc.?

Elif: We have a Timeline Table in Excel that tracks those, but it's not linked to anything. Each exhibition folder has its own version, which is fine for now. But if we ever move to a database, that would be the backbone for relationships between objects, events, and people.

Interviewer: Understood. Now, one small technical question—do the “object codes” you mentioned also appear in auction records?

Elif: Hmm... I'm not entirely sure. I think sometimes they do, but that part is handled differently. You should probably ask Can Bey, he finalizes those catalog files.

Interviewer: Thank you for clarifying that. Finally, what would you say is the most difficult part of keeping all these records consistent?

Elif: Probably the human factor. Everyone writes things slightly differently—artist names, artwork titles, file names. Consistency is hard when you're moving fast. But that's also why documentation matters. Even if the data isn't perfect, we can still trace back what happened.

Interviewer: That makes sense. Thank you so much, Elif Hanım, for sharing all these details.

Elif: You're welcome. I hope it helps make sense of how a small gallery actually works behind the scenes.