

# Feelings and Thoughts at his Fingertips

**Khaled Abdulwahed's exploration of fingers and mundane things in life are well-chosen catalysts for his art**

Jethu Abraham

**S**heer curiosity is a good enough reason for anyone wanting to visit Khaled Abdulwahed's exhibition titled *Fingers and Things* at the Art Sawa Gallery in Al Quoz. To be showcased on the 28th of this month, the journey from the canvas to the gallery has been challenging and inspirational for the artist, who is also a discerning art lover.

"It's been five years since I came to Dubai. I worked in Syria for 10 years, held two exhibitions there and then came to Dubai where I worked in an advertising agency. But I decided to quit; I just had to return to art," says Abdulwahed.

His previous work focused on fine art photography and was displayed at the Goethe German Cultural Centre and the French Cultural Centre in Damascus. This is the first time his works are being exhibited in a gallery.

Abdulwahed explains the subject and title of his new exhibition, "Don't you think your fingers are very interesting?"

"I get very excited by the shape of the fingers. They reflect personality. We don't merely use our fingers to pick up objects, we use them to accentuate a

statement in religion, science and, of course, heavy metal music," he laughs as he points his forefinger and little finger up in the air to resemble a horn sign, well known to rockers everywhere.

One of Abdulwahed's paintings is of two fingers facing each other with a Technicolor screen in the background. One of the slender fingers sports a painted nail, while the other appears masculine, is sturdier and has a shorter nail — perhaps showing a relationship in the spotlight?

He explains: "Even as I painted, I saw a clear interaction between the foreground and the background. My logical mind always tries to explore the relationship between the fingers and the medium that they are in."

"I love to see a finger on a plain canvas, slowly pushing its way into emptiness. I give them strong strokes to accentuate their spaces — this is where you move,



this your life, this is where you go," he says. The next painting shows a group of fingers at different angles. From a distance, it looks like a group of brown *abaya*-clad women, each trying to make a better point than the other. Abdulwahed agrees and says interpretations excite him, which is why he has not named his works, allowing them to speak to the gallery visitors instead.

The *Things* part of the exhibition was quite a random pick, says Abdulwahed, who chose ordinary objects in life "to know more about their soul."

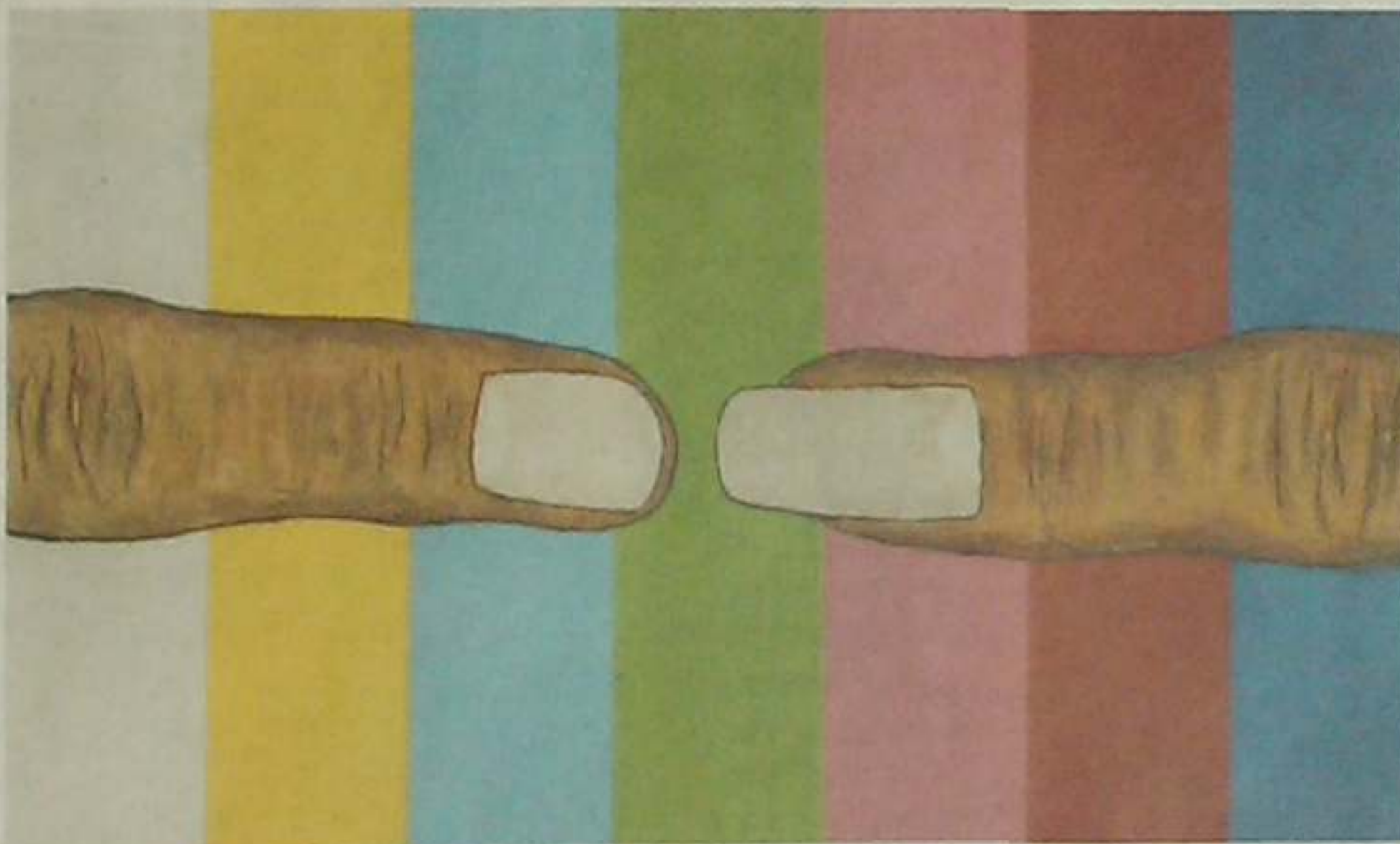
"It is quite interesting to take a thing that we interact with daily and to bring out a trait in it that no one would have noticed before," he says. "In that process, I also got to discover myself as well."

A teacup with a tea satchel hanging out of it suggests a must-do habit, a teddy bear keychain hanging from a door hints at loneliness. Abdulwahed shows painting after painting of ordinary things including a simple white commode.

"The toilet is one of the most intimate but ignored rooms in the world — it is the only room where people can get a bit of a privacy, or simply connect with themselves," says Abdulwahed.

Abdulwahed, a keen fan of contemporary classic art, is excited about his upcoming exhibition — his first after leaving a highly paid job to pursue his love of art. "I worked in advertising for many years and have always sought an answer to the question in my mind — 'what's an idea?' Instead, I found a new kind of idea; an idea that needs freedom to live; the one that needs to be felt first before it could be understood; to me that is art."

jethu@khaleejtimes.com



**ARTISTIC TOUCH:** Khaled Abdulwahed (top centre) and some of his works