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"I have been investigating patterns of language, in particular the language of advertising and the language of politics. I have been investigating patterns of gendered codes of behaviour and patterns of ideological systems of belief and patterns of everyday, lived cultural practices related to leisure, work, food and fashion. Through this exploration I am attempting to knit these patterns together to create a deeper understanding of history and of a sense of place." (1)

**Knitting Patterns** re-imagines modern-day nostalgia for the New Zealand of the 1950s and 60s. Referencing illustrative techniques from this period, Simon Clark questions if this yearning for the 'golden weather' of times gone by might not be misplaced as he plays with cultural constructions and the framing of what 'Kiwi' is.

Working from the maxim, 'more is more', Clark's works demand immediate attention; gold leaf, optical patterning, repeated motifs, and high-contrast colours are all designed to attract the gaze. As the gaze lingers however, the subtle detailing and surface treatments tell more of the stories in which Clark is interested. As he layers images and composes space, he likewise layers ideas and composes his own historical constructs.

*Big Ben*, the face of a pie brand, is set against a background of gold and cobalt-blue more commonly associated with illuminated manuscripts. Upon closer inspection, the gold looks a little battered, and the background worn and scratched: Clark deliberately 'removes the gloss' from his paintings, giving them a sense of time's passing and untold histories. *New Zea Land* presents a blonde-haired, blue-eyed 'Maori doll', complete with piupiu, woven bodice, and tiara. Does the parade of moa circling her suggest this form of cultural appropriation should be as extinct as the bird?

Simon Clark has produced a series of works that seem strangely familiar. At a time when stylised tiki, retro advertisements and Crown Lynn swans adorn all manner of products in every design store, Clark queries the rose-tinted glasses through which this is viewed and asks how much are we buying into a history that never existed?

1. Simon Clark, Artist's statement, June, 2014