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## UNITED BANK

an in-windows series at 3945 Chestnut Street<sup>1</sup>

"[T]he social command is constituted by 'the presence of a problem in society, whose solution is imaginable only in poetic terms'. One must not confuse this – as it seems that we have tried hard to do for almost half a century – with the 'practical command' (i.e., 'actual commissions') constituted by the existence, in society, of solutions that the poetic work has as its function to illustrate. These two conceptions are irreducible to each other, and do not coincide. [...]

What remains is to entirely exit this problem, and to denounce, in this relation – social command, practical command – the functioning of ideology as fashion system."

—Jean-Claude Montel (1973)<sup>2</sup>

## TO OUR DEPOSITORS

Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky invented, with critic Osip Brik, the idea of a "social command" – perceptible as "the presence of a problem in society, whose solution is imaginable only in poetic terms."

Fifty years later, French novelist/critic Jean-Claude Montel distinguished between "social command" and "actual commission." To write from a "social command" is non-reducible to the immediate, instrumental ends of a protest poem, commissioned for a particular march or political function.

UNITED BANK may be said to listen-up for today's "social commands" in order to make ideology perceptible as ideology, fashion as fashion. The word "social" exists within every word as a declaration of dependence on the palpable world. Commanding and commanded by this world, every word is a metropolis.

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<sup>1</sup> Slought Networks Curators: Aaron Levy, Louis Cabri. Statement by Louis Cabri. Poets (in order of appearance): Rodrigo Toscano (October 4-18), Jeff Derksen (October 19-November 2), Rita Wong (November 3-17), Louis Cabri (November 18-December 2). Photographs: Stefan Abrams (October). Installation: Aaron Levy (November). "UNITED BANK," a Slought Networks storefront series, is funded by Facilities and Real Estate Services at the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> From "A Propos the Social Command"; French translation by Louis Cabri. In this passage, Jean-Claude Montel cites Vladimir Mayakovsky's definition of "social command" from "How Are Verses Made?" (1926).