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WALTER RUTTMANN**The “Absolute” Fashion: Film as an End in Itself; Beware of the
Art pour l’art Position**

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It was apparently inevitable: the “absolute” film has become fashionable. Years ago, when I showed the first examples thereof, some greeted it fanatically, while others patroniz-

ingly belittled it as the stuff of outsiders. An ebb in overall film production is now the occasion for propagating absolute film as gospel. The lack of clarity over its nature is only advantageous for such propaganda.

What is an absolute film? A film where one does not trust that art may emerge from the practice of filmmaking but rather where the theory, the confident idea of autonomous film art, comes first—the a priori certainty: “The aesthetic laws of film are *only* thus.”

In principle, of course, it would be gratifying if artists were to replace the old hands. But does one mean well for film when one pushes too zealously for its artistic purification? Does one understand it correctly when one wishes upon it, for example, the fate of absolute music? Should it drift into poorly frequented concert halls, distill itself monastically for a small parish of aesthetically discerning people who guard the “purity” of its structure?

Let us not place art before all else! For film is (thank God!) not only an artistic but also, above all, a *human and social* affair! It is the strongest advocate for the spirit that reunites vital and artistic interests—for that spirit that renders jazz “more important” today than a sonata, a poster “more important” than a painting. For today, art—*living* art—is no longer what we were taught in school, no longer a flight from the world into higher domains but rather an act of entering into the world and elucidating its nature. *Art is no longer abstraction, but a kind of statement!* Art that does not contain a pronouncement belongs in the armory. Regardless, of course, of the subject of this pronouncement—whether feminine beauty, socialism, technology, nature, or their interconnections. The important thing is only the fact of the human statement.

And the absolute film avoids exactly this kind of statement. It wishes to leave an impact not by speaking well and forcefully but rather by doing something “beautiful” *without* saying anything at all. It does not strive to render a valuable thing so valuable and consummate that it becomes “art” entirely on its own but instead wants only art from the outset. That is its mistake. For it does not build the house but only the scaffolding. *When it realizes this limitation, its integrative power is inestimable.*

But when it purports to be an end and goal in itself, it slides automatically into the junk room of *l'art pour l'art*, from which film had just released us.