***L’Art pour l’Art***, or *art for art’s sake*, refers to a rubric of ideologies and aesthetic paradigms with roots in 18th and 19th century Western European Romanticism, particularly indebted to Immanuel Kant’s *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgement* (1790) and subsequent attempts to theorize and practice art as a non-utilitarian but crucially human endeavour, experience, and field of knowledge.

Swiss-French litteratêur Benjamin Constant, an intimate of Mme de Staël, Goethe, the Schlegel brothers, and Schiller, first used the phrase in 1804. Théophile Gautier is credited with first courting, even cultivating, controversy around it through his widely-read, polemical essays (1835-1861) on the independence and integrity of art unencumbered by didactic or moral responsibility. William Makepeace Thackeray first used *art for art’s sake* in 1839; Walter Pater and James A. McNeill Whistler developed influential discourses of Aestheticism around it through the late 1800s.

Through the politically volatile twentieth century, *l’art pour l’art* became the locus of variously revolutionary and reactionary movements and debates: it came to signify or symbolize a wide range of frequently divergent perspectives on the nature and value of ostensibly disinterested, apolitical, autotelic artistic production. It remains, however, an exhilarating, powerful conceit in the twenty-first-century popular, artistic, literary, critical imagination.

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***Urvashi Vashist***