

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Russian ark</b>
Author(s)	Jonathan Rosenbaum
Source	<i>Reader (Chicago, Ill.)</i>
Date	2003 Jan 31
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	8
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Russkij kovcheg (Russian ark), Sokurov, Aleksandr, 2002

Jan 31, 2003 Chicago Reader p. 8

CRITIC'S  
CHOICE

## Russian Ark

**T**his Alexander Sokurov feature (2002) is one of the most staggering technical achievements in the history of cinema—a single shot lasting 95 minutes while moving through 33 rooms in the world's largest museum, the Hermitage in Saint Petersburg (which also encompasses the Winter Palace). Part pageant and museum tour, part theme-park ride and historical meditation, it traverses two centuries of czarist Russia as smoothly as it crosses the Hermitage, with the offscreen Sokurov engaged in an ongoing dialogue with an on-screen 19th-century French diplomat (apparently suggested by Adolphe, marquis de Custine). Sokurov used close to 2,000 actors and extras and three live orchestras in making what may be the most ambitious single-take feature as well as the

longest Steadicam sequence ever shot. This is also the first uncompressed high-definition film recorded on a portable hard-disk system rather than film or tape before being transferred to 35-millimeter. The problem with these feats is that they threaten to overwhelm the film's content, both as complex historical commentary and as aesthetic and theoretical gesture. As critic J. Hoberman has suggested, this is an anti-*October*, challenging Eisenstein's reliance on montage while using the Winter Palace as a gigantic set. All of which is to say that we're only just starting to grasp the dimensions of this formidable achievement. In Russian with subtitles. Music Box, Friday through Thursday, January 31 through February 6. —Jonathan Rosenbaum