

Chinese marvels

THE ISRAEL Museum this week opened a magnificent exhibition of Chinese paintings from the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Arthur M. Sackler, a feast for tiros and scholars alike.

Sackler, an American M.D., is a noted collector in many fields, but this body of work is of special interest. Its unique strength, to quote Prof. Wen Fong of Princeton, lies in a group of 15 important works by Tao-chi (or Shih-t'ao, circa 1641-1710), though the collection ranges from the 14th century until the modern period. The collection also includes a forgery album in Tao-chi's style as well as three copies of his work. The magnificent accompanying catalogue (really a large book) entitled "Issues in Connoisseurship," by Marilyn and Shen Fu (Shen is on the research staff of the Taiwan National Palace Museum and a recent Research Fellow at Princeton, where his wife was also trained) contains a long essay on the problems and techniques of attribution, which illuminates much of this fascinating show.

Laymen will also find this Sherlock Holmesian dissertation fascinating; and those unfamiliar with Chinese painting should have no qualms about coming to this exhibition to enjoy simple "gut reactions." There is no great mystery to Chinese art; and no barrier to "Western" enjoyment of its



Tao-chi (1641-1710): ink on paper (Sackler Collection, Israel Museum).

delights. Nor does one have to read Chinese in order to appreciate the beauties of calligraphy, or to become aware of the differences between the handwriting of the various masters.

This splendid travelling show of works from the famous geographical "eye" of central China, will be on view until May; we hope to review it in detail in a forthcoming issue. □

MEIR RONNEN