By Lon Tuck
Washington Post Staff

WASHINGTON — One of the motivating forces of art
collectors, said Dr. Arthur M. Sackler, a psychiatrist who
should know, is frustration. “When some
people are frustrated, they go out
and buy a new car, or a tie. When I
have, I have gone out and
bought myself something truly
beautiful. So my collections are in
some sense the measure of my frustra-
tions.”

Sackler, who just turned 73,
over the years has acquired tens
of thousands of objects in an
extraordinarily diverse and inten-
sively thorough set of collections.
There is the fabulous Asian collec-
tion (long covered by several ma-
ior museums), but there are also
erustic holdings in Parisian draw-
ings, Italian majolica, Euro-
pian terra-cotta, pre-Columbian
cloths and textiles. Sackler said
Thomas Lawrence, head of the
Fitzwilliam Museum, “a modern Medi-
cine.”

Next May the Smithsonian's
Artemis M. Sackler Gallery of
Oriental art, will open on the
quadrangle behind the Smith-
sonian Castle in Washington, giving
the Sackler collection the same
visibility as those of Charles
Lang Freer and Joseph Hinson,
whom, similarly personal galleries lie on either side.

Who is this man who has also
made major artistic bequests to
Harvard, Princeton, Columbus,
and in 1968 opened the New York's Metropolitan
Museum? Yes, there are many
Sacklers, but this Sackler who
lives in a plastic Fifth Avenue
apartment in New York that he
shares with his con-
siderably younger wife, Jill, an
art impresario herself, has a special
interest in music. His art is simply
the most visible. The three-
square-foot studio he sent be-
fore the interview was meticu-
ously chopped into three cate-
ories: “In Science,” on which
he is a researcher director of the
Carnegie Institute for Psy-
chological Studies from 1946 to
1955. “In America,” which
will open on Columbus's Aca-
decy Council of the Department of
Art History and Archaeology
from 1961 to 1974. And “In the
Humanities,” beginning with his
1967 sponsorship of a symposium
on "Early Chinese Art and its
Possible Influence in the Pacific
Basin" (published in two vol-
umes.)

Among the most visible fruits
of his patronage are the Sackler
Institute of Graduate Biomedical
Science at New York University
(his alma mater), the Arthur M.
Sackler Center for Health Com-
nunications at Tufts, the Sackler
Wing at the Metropolitan Muse-
um (built to house the Temple of
Dendur), and the Arthur M.
Sackler Museum at Harvard,
which opened last year to critical
praise for its striking design by
the British architect James Stil-
ging.

At the top of the first page
Sackler categorized himself as
"physician, researcher, publish-
er." There is no mention of his
fortunes, estimated in the Forbes
magazine 400 list as $175 million
plus and most notably in medical
publications and advertising.

But with all his interests, what
motivates Sackler as a collector? It
really, he suggested, just
impulse. "As much as love," he
responded with a wry grin. Some
collections, he said, are "state-
ments" and others merely "inter-
decoration." The acquisition of
a great aesthetic statement is a
work of art itself, an act of pas-
ion. And in no sense is it
uncontrollable. It constitutes in
significant measure an act of im-
pulse. I have mentioned the role
of discipline in collecting. You
heard me say that I consider sci-
ence a discipline with passion.
And art as a passion for discipline.
I don't believe that there can be
any creativity without passion. Be-
cause I think all great art has
enormous emotional content: a
message of the Creator, conveyed
within the language of his medi-
um.

Few dates have been darker for
the August Metropolitan Mus-
ium of Art than when it became
known that the Metropolitan
would not, as assumed, get the
cream of the Sackler Oriental col-
lection, which was going, instead,
to the Smithsonian. About 1,000
Sackler's Asian pieces had been
stored at the Met for 16 years.

Asked if he was disappointed in
the loss of the Oriental collection,
the Met director Philippe de
Montebello said: "The disas-
sume the net always have that view.
"The collection that got away
from the Met is, and the Freer's
Lawson, "the largest collection
of Chinese art that I know of in
private hands." Lawton has chosen 135 of
them for the Sackler Gallery in Wash-
ington. They were chosen to com-
ment on the collection of humans
at the Freer, which has one of
the world's great collections of art dynamis (since 1523 to 1027 B.C.)

Sackler gave Lawton carte
blanche to go to the Met's Sackler
collection and, in effect, he did
the collection for the new gallery.
"It was a steady experience of art
standards," recalled the Freer's
director.

In addition Sackler agreed to
contribute $4 million to construc-
tion of the $75-million installa-
tion of the Met, an architectural
designed to be built on the
Oriental art.

Sackler in gallery being built for his Oriental art.