



A friendship of geniuses

A rare letter in an Athens show documents the close relationship between Nobelists Marie Curie and Albert Einstein

ALBERT Einstein may have had a close relationship with Marie Curie, according to a letter to be presented by the Museum of the Hellenic Nobel Collection in a tribute to European Researchers' Night on September 28.

The letter, written by Einstein and addressed to Doris Leavitt Appel, who sculpted a statue of Curie, is the exclusive primary-source document that proves the relationship between Einstein and Curie. Giorgio Marcou (*photo below*), creator, curator and benefactor of the Hellenic Nobel Collection, will present the letter along with a catalogue of the 10,000 exhibits at the museum, which has received awards from the Athens Academy and the Tesla Foundation of North America.



Appel, who was also a friend of Einstein's, always held that the two Nobel Prize winners were close and stated in interviews in the 1970s that a great fondness existed between the two scientists, who were 12 years apart in age.

It is rumoured that Curie used her influence to help secure a professorship for Einstein at the University of Zurich, as well as the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921. In turn, Einstein praised her as being "of all celebrated beings the only whom fame has not corrupted". A few rare photographs show Curie and Einstein together, but the letter will be the first written evidence of their friendship.

The letter suggests that Einstein deeply felt Curie's absence after her premature death from exposure to radiation during her research, as it reads: "Due to my obligations, I forgot to express my warm gratitude for the truly depictive statue of Madame Curie. Your work is a beautiful portrayal of this truly special personality who was so important to me, and it will help me to hold on to some of the precious memories that I have of her."

The event will take place at the National Research Institute (EIE)

in Athens at 48 Vas Konstantinou Avenue on September 28 at 6pm and marks the eighth year that Greece is celebrating European Researchers' Night. The EIE will also host a Q&A session with renowned Greek and other European scientists participating; there will also be presentations, as well as lab experiments and activities for children.

Lynn Edmonds



A rare photograph of Marie Curie and Albert Einstein, in the Swiss Alps (from the archives of the Italian newspaper Il Tempo)

