

BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



José Parlá at work in his Brooklyn, New York studio

JOSÉ PARLÁ ENGRAMS

10 June – 31 July 2026

Private View: Tuesday 9 June, 6pm
12 Brook's Mews, London W1K 4DG

Ben Brown Fine Arts is delighted to announce *ENGRAMS*, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by Brooklyn-based artist José Parlá. Comprising nine new canvases and six paintings on paper, the exhibition will be on view at the gallery's London space from 9 June – 31 July 2026.

An engram is the physical trace a memory leaves in the brain – a living, ever-shifting pattern that reactivates and reshapes itself each time it is recalled. By this understanding, memory is reconstruction rather than retrieval, and the act of remembering becomes a creative gesture in its own right – the principle that underpins the series.

Three landscapes inform this body of work: the radiant, expansive sunsets of Havana, Cuba; the dense, immersive greenery of the forests in Hakone, Japan; and the subterranean energy of New York City's urban corridors. Where Old Master painters have historically returned to the same landscape day after day, documenting the shifting subtleties of light through direct observation, Parlá inverted this practice. He visited each site only once, then painted from memory alone, allowing the act of remembering, with all its stretching, reconfiguring and transforming, to do the compositional work. As he puts it, "by activating the same memory repeatedly, the accuracy of the image progressively starts dissolving, allowing doors of genuine imagination to swing open."

In *Kinesthetic Memory Field* (2026), Parlá bisects the canvas with a crisply delineated horizon, above which an eruption of saturated yellow gathers into the suggestion of a sun, its luminous presence answered by a shimmering reflection in the plane below. Havana's sunset operates here as a structuring armature rather than a subject, as the figurative dissolves into pure chromatic atmosphere, leaving only the essence of place. By contrast, *Subterranean Trace of New York City* (2026) presents a densely accreted surface in which fragments of collaged material, half-legible text and weathered passages of pigment emerge from a metallic palette of greys, ochres and oxidised silvers. The work reads as palimpsest – the layered visual record of a city continually overwritten – evoking the gritty texture, febrile energy and stratified density of New York's subterranean corridors and graffiti-strewn walls.

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Engram Study 4 – Hakone Mindscape (2026) takes the mountainous terrain of the Japanese resort town as its point of departure. Brilliant white flecks scatter across the sheet like drifts of vapour, while gestural calligraphic marks weave through the composition, summoning the spectral fog that settles between Hakone's peaks and the verdant, leaf-dense slopes that surround them.

Treating memory as a biological as well as a creative process, Parlá inscribes his recollections onto the canvas through transparency, dry-brushing and collage, building up the layered imprints of time. This impulse is nowhere more apparent than in *Inscriptions in Transit* (2026), where his vibrant strokes branch and bifurcate across the surface in a manner that recalls the dendritic structures of neural pathways and the body's own circulatory networks, drawing a direct visual correspondence between body, mind and canvas. The paintings are, in a very real sense, neural events made visible, each work a record not of a place but of the mind's continuous work of remembering and rewriting it.

ENGRAMS is the first iteration of a broader investigation of the same name – an acronym for Exploring Neighborhoods, Gestures, Archived Memory Spaces. The research is being developed during Parlá's current residency at Columbia University's Zuckerman Institute, where he is this year's Alan Kanzer Artist Resident, and forms part of his ongoing exploration of the dialogue between art and neuroscience.

ABOUT JOSÉ PARLÁ

José Parlá (b. 1973, Miami, FL) is a multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans painting, large-scale mural projects, photography, video and sculpture. His work is deeply informed by the textures, rhythms and palimpsests of urban environments, shaped by his upbringing in South Miami, his life in New York and his Cuban heritage. Parlá studied at Miami Dade Community College, Miami; New World School of the Arts, Miami; and the Savannah College of Art and Design, Georgia. His permanent public commissions include projects for the New York City Department of Design and Construction at the Queens Public Library; the University of Texas at Austin; One World Trade Center, where his monumental mural *ONE: Union of the Senses* remains the largest of its kind in New York City; Barclays Center and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York; North Carolina State University's Hunt Library, Raleigh; and Concord CityPlace, Toronto. Institutional solo exhibitions have been presented by the Gordon Parks Foundation, New York (2024); Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami (2024); the Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York (2022); Gana Art Center, Seoul (2022); Istanbul'74, Istanbul (2019); the Hong Kong Contemporary Art Foundation (2019); the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York (2018); the SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah (2017); the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York (2017); the Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas (2016); and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta (2015), among others. Parlá's work is held in numerous public collections, including the Pérez Art Museum Miami (PAMM); the British Museum, London; the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Buffalo, New York; the POLA Museum of Art, Hakone; the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York; El Espacio, Miami; and the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana.

ABOUT BEN BROWN FINE ARTS

Ben Brown Fine Arts is an international gallery specialising in post-war and contemporary art with locations in London, Hong Kong and New York. Founded in London's Mayfair in 2004, the gallery operates across both primary and secondary markets and represents a group of leading contemporary artists including Tony Bevan, Awol Erizku, Candida Höfer, Vik Muniz, Yoan Capote, Nabil Nahas, Gavin Turk, José Parlá, Enoc Perez and Ena Swansea. Alongside its contemporary programme, Ben Brown Fine Arts is known for exhibitions of post-war figures such as Alighiero Boetti, Frank Auerbach, Alexander Calder, Lucio Fontana, Gerhard Richter and Claude and François-Xavier Lalanne. Recent landmark exhibition projects include *Planète Lalanne* during the 60th Venice Biennale (2024), *Calder: Extreme Cantilever* (London, 2024), *Alighiero e Boetti: Embellishing the Sky* (London, 2025) and *Alighiero Boetti*, curated by Elena Guena at SMAC during the 61st Venice Biennale (2026). The gallery participates regularly in international art fairs, including Art Basel (Basel, Hong Kong and Miami Beach), Frieze Masters, TEFAF (Maastricht and New York), Miart, the Armory Show and Art Mumbai.

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