

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, August 19, 2025



MELVIN L. NESBITT JR.

Your Lil Friends

September 13 – October 25, 2025

Washington, DC - HEMPHILL is pleased to announce the exhibition *MELVIN L NESBITT JR: Your Lil Friends*, opening on Saturday, September 13, 2025, from 4 – 7 p.m. The exhibition will remain on view through October 25, 2025.

There is little evidence to directly link art to solving a problem, but there is evidence that it opens us up to feeling differently. Could art be a first step? Can it encourage the positive inclinations of humans? These days, we find ourselves seeking common ideals. Throughout the history of visual image-making, subjects have ranged from evil to good to the simply decorative. In retrospect, the art of a particular period reveals itself to possess the character of the time in which it was created. Some artworks have endured over time because of their evocative portrayal of human vulnerability. Portrayals of vulnerability are often incompatible with the commercial ambitions of galleries. This raises concerns about the relevance of the contemporary art gallery in today's world.

We find in the paintings of Melvin L. Nesbitt Jr. something gentle and positive. The narrative of his work portrays children going about their day. What he draws out of us are universal concerns. What is more vulnerable than a child? How can we best understand and nurture children? Do they not exemplify our highest hopes? What can be happier than a child? Dr. Martin Luther King, always quotable, said, "Darkness is not defeated by darkness, darkness is defeated by light." King's words are as applicable today as Nesbitt's paintings.

Your Lil Friends is Melvin L. Nesbitt Jr.'s inaugural exhibition at HEMPHILL. He was born in Spartanburg SC and came to Washington DC in 2006. Nesbitt has completed public murals for the CW Harris Elementary School, Washington, DC (2020) and the District Department of General Services Headquarters, Washington, DC (2023). Since 2021, he has returned to his elementary school to conduct an annual collage workshop for nearly five hundred children. Nesbitt lives and works in Baltimore, MD.

HEMPHILL opened in September 1993 and has since presented over 300 solo and group exhibitions in gallery spaces throughout Washington, DC and, since 2019, in DC's Mt Vernon Triangle location. The exhibition schedule features modern and contemporary art in all media by artists ranging from emerging to mid-career to modern masters.

GALLERY HOURS:

Tuesday – Saturday 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. and by appointment

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Melvin L. Nesbitt Jr., *My Sisters With Me*, 2025, mixed media collage on canvas, 64 x 72 inches

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE FOR REPRODUCTION

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