

They had met at Hampton University, where both were undergraduates. He courted her for years, sometimes long-distance, before she finally agreed to marry him in December 1948. Within a few years of their arrival, they settled into the ranch-style brick house in the tree-lined Riverside neighborhood east of the Museum District that is still their home.

The city was segregated, as was the rest of the country. But, Biggers has said, "the conditions (for blacks) in Philadelphia and New York in the 1940s repelled me. Houston was segregated, but we had recognition from the community at large."

Besides, he says, Texas was close to Mexico where the great muralists—Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros—had made a case for art as a political and pedagogic tool as well as an aesthetic pursuit. And Texas was in the South, where the idealistic artist felt he could find—and define—himself, too.

"I wanted to get involved with and attempt to express the lifestyle and spiritual aspirations of the black people," Biggers once said in an interview. "The richness of it was here."

Complicating the issue of racism, the problem—and bitter disappointment—was that at the time, the black community didn't realize or understand who they were and the cultural wealth it possessed. Most blacks viewed acculturation as the goal. But Biggers, who had first learned about African art and life from his teacher, Viktor Lowenfeld, wanted "to change old images of poverty into new perceptions of honest, simple dignity," he states in "Black Art in Houston."

"We had to rip through veils . . . (and) understand new truths," he said. Africa was the route to reconnecting with "our ancestors (who) were hewers of wood and drawers of water, husbands of the land." His desire to visit Africa was derided by everyone, especially his TSU colleagues, who urged him to go to Paris and London instead.

Still, the determined young artist persisted, and in 1957, a grant from UNESCO enabled Biggers and his wife to visit the ancestral land for six months. It was an epiphany, and it changed his life and his art forever.

"I found a dignity (in the African people) I had rarely encountered before, for I had been accustomed to living with warped personalities all my life," he wrote in "Ananse," published in 1962. "I admired the African's straightforwardness, a characteristic that contrasted sharply—and much in his favor—with the slippery maneuverings of our culture."

"And when I heard the great drums call the people, when I saw the people respond with an enthusiasm unequalled by any other call of man or God, I rejoiced, I knew that many of these intrinsic African values would never be lost in the dehumanizing scientific age—just as they were not lost during the dark centuries of slavery."

In the United States, the civil rights movement was changing blacks' perception of themselves. Though art seemed peripheral to it all and Biggers' emphasis on Africa "was not resting well with the more conservative faculty members (at TSU)," as Alvia Wardlaw noted in her catalog on Biggers' retrospective, the artist "continued to teach the fundamentals of drawing, printmaking and paintings . . . and the murals created by his students increasingly reflected the movement's struggles."

Anything else would have been dishonest to an individual of conscience and the artist of vision.

In his own work, Biggers struggled for a unified image that would reflect the ancestral legacy of Africa and the realities of contemporary urban America. His figures became increasingly abstract, and he incorporated personal symbols—the quilt, remembered from his grandmother's house, and the kettle, in which his mother boiled the laundry—as he searched for archetypes. His palette of earth tones became lighter and almost transparent. He described complex spaces with patterns combining elements of the urban landscape, notably the shotgun houses symbolic of freed slaves, and pure geometry based on the symmetry of the classic quilt. He populated these spaces with families, mothers and children especially, who shared it with magical things like the rabbits and tortoises of West African creation myths and celestial bodies.

Biggers retired from TSU in 1983 and has since been dividing his time between Houston and Gastonia, preferring the rural simplicity and quiet of his hometown, where his family also lives, to the urban cacophony. In a way, it's returning to the dreams of his youth, discovering the connectedness to the Earth and its rhythms that he had discovered on that first visit to Africa.

"I like the little frogs and the birds and the trees," he says with a laugh.

He's delighted by the attention his retrospective is receiving, and graciously attends the events that surround it, most recently at the Boston museum. But he's tired, he says.

"When you're young and have goals, you're interested in reaching out and proving yourself. I'm not interested in that anymore," he says.

"I'm a person who needs to work rather than celebrate. For me, the payoff is the work itself. I think this work I'm doing now is showing I've grown. It has greater simplicity, and I like that."

Biggers has a mural commission, the 16th in his career, in progress. He titled it "Salt Marsh," and enlisted friend and former student James McNeil to assist. Its final version will be 10 feet by 27 feet, painted with acrylic on canvas. On this cool winter morning, work is in the early stages, with McNeil painstakingly translating Biggers' first small but detailed pencil drawing into a larger, color-coded version pinned to the studio wall.

In a corner, a half-finished painting sits on the easel waiting for the artist's return. This, too, is a commission, and similarly loaded with symbols and meanings distilled from decades of research and hundreds of artworks.

He's titled it "The Morning Star." There, in Biggers' unmistakable crystalline colors and geometric forms, are the father and mother, the son who's being born and the daughter who is yet to be conceived, in a mystical space with the symbolic rabbit and turtle. Ever the teacher and storyteller, he explains:

"You see, the boy here is being born from the blue sky. Those are his parents, sitting on a bench, which is on a barge, their feet on the floor, which is a xylophone." The soft voice goes on to describe the other components, their shapes and their origins in ancient African myths, and their timeless meaning.

"Individual life is very short," he says, "All things rise and fall, live and die."

"But if we agree the spirit does not die, that it reinhabits the world, time takes a different dimension."

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind Members to refrain from urging action by the Senate or characterizing action of the Senate.

PUBLICATION OF THE RULES OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES 107TH CONGRESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at its organizational meeting on January 3, 2001, pursuant to clause 2(a)(1)(A) of rule XI of the rules of the House, the Rules Committee adopted in an open meeting, with a quorum present, its committee rules for the 107th Congress. Pursuant to clause 2(a)(1)(D) of rule XI of the rules of the House and clause (d) of rule I of the rules of the Committee on Rules, the rules of the Committee on Rules are hereby submitted for printing in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

RULES OF THE COMMITTEE ON RULES—U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 107TH CONGRESS RULE 1—GENERAL PROVISIONS

(a) The rules of the House are the rules of the Committee and its subcommittees so far as applicable, except that a motion to recess from day to day, and a motion to dispense with the first reading (in full) of a bill or resolution, if printed copies are available, are non-debatable privileged motions in the Committee. A proposed investigative or oversight report shall be considered as read if it has been available to the members of the Committee for at least 24 hours (excluding Saturdays, Sundays, or legal holidays except when the House is in session on such day).

(b) Each subcommittee is a part of the Committee, and is subject to the authority and direction of the Committee and to its rules so far as applicable.

(c) The provisions of clause 2 of rule XI of the rules of the House are incorporated by reference as the rules of the Committee to the extent applicable.

(d) The Committee's rules shall be published in the Congressional Record not later than 30 days after the Committee is elected in each odd-numbered year.

RULE 2—REGULAR, ADDITIONAL, AND SPECIAL MEETINGS

Regular Meetings

(a)(1) The Committee shall regularly meet at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday of each week when the House is in session.

(2) A regular meeting of the Committee may be dispensed with if, in the judgment of the Chairman of the Committee (hereafter in these rules referred to as the "Chair"), there is no need for the meeting.

(3) Additional regular meetings and hearings of the Committee may be called by the Chair.

Notice for Regular Meetings

(b) The Chair shall notify each member of the Committee of the agenda of each regular meeting of the Committee at least 48 hours before the time of the meeting and shall provide to each member of the Committee, at least 24 hours before the time of each regular meeting.

(1) for each bill or resolution scheduled on the agenda for consideration of a rule, a copy of