



# johnny cash trail art experience

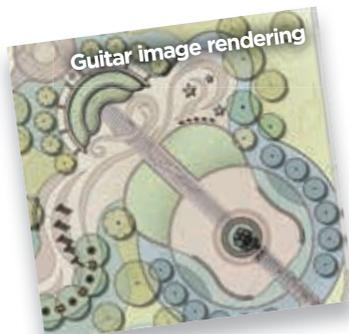
## Learn, Listen and Reflect

by LeeAnn Dickson

Not every city in the U.S. is recognized around the world, but as the saying goes: Folsom is on the map. Nearly 50 years ago, an electrifying combination of a country singing star and a maximum-security prison brought the city into the limelight of international stardom.

When Johnny Cash performed to inmates in the Folsom State Prison cafeteria on January 13, 1968, the artist, his career, the city of Folsom and the prison would never be the same again: The Man in Black had made an impact on the music world that still resonates today.

Robert Goss, director of Folsom's Parks and Recreation Department had an idea. He wanted to connect the American River Bike Trail and the Folsom



Lake Trail with a 2.5-mile swath through Folsom. Goss, a lifelong Cash fan, took the concept of the Johnny Cash Trail Art Experience to the city council, and it was unanimously approved. "I'm lucky to have a great staff and city lead-

ership with the vision to help make this happen," Goss says. "I work with some very creative people."

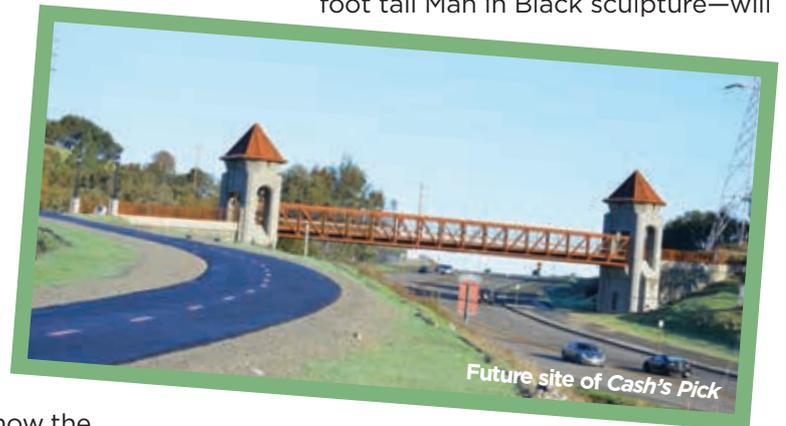
Their plan is to honor and celebrate Cash for his place in Folsom history—all while advancing public art and recreational trails. "This is significant for the city," Goss says. "The art experience tells a story about the impact Cash has had, and continues to have, on our community and prison...and how the Folsom Prison concert impacted his life and career."

In late 2014, the first phase of the project—which includes a 1.2-mile trail and a pedestrian/bike bridge that spans Folsom Lake Crossing and East Natoma Street—opened to the public. Phase two of the endeavor, slated to break ground this summer, will finish up the trail with a 1.25-mile segment on prison property.

After the completion, there will be a huge fund-raising effort to bring the "art experience" to the trail. The estimated \$8

million will be raised through community events, corporate sponsorships and social media contacts. All of the art pieces are inspired by Cash and the Folsom Prison concerts, and at each end of the trail there will be a seven-foot tall guitar pick; as with the first note of a song, the pick will mark the beginning of the trail. Between, many more opportunities to be immersed in Cash's life and music will abound. "The trail is designed to be interactive," Goss explains. "The more you read and reflect, the deeper the storyline goes, and with it your experience."

Along with the art, the three-acre Johnny Cash Legacy Park is planned. This intimate outdoor amphitheater—with grounds reminiscent of a guitar and a 50-foot tall Man in Black sculpture—will



hold between 100-200 people. It's designed for impromptu concerts or just a place for Cash fans and trail users to rest, relax and reflect. The grounds will include a series of interpretive spaces and features designed to tell the story of the famous concerts held at the prison.

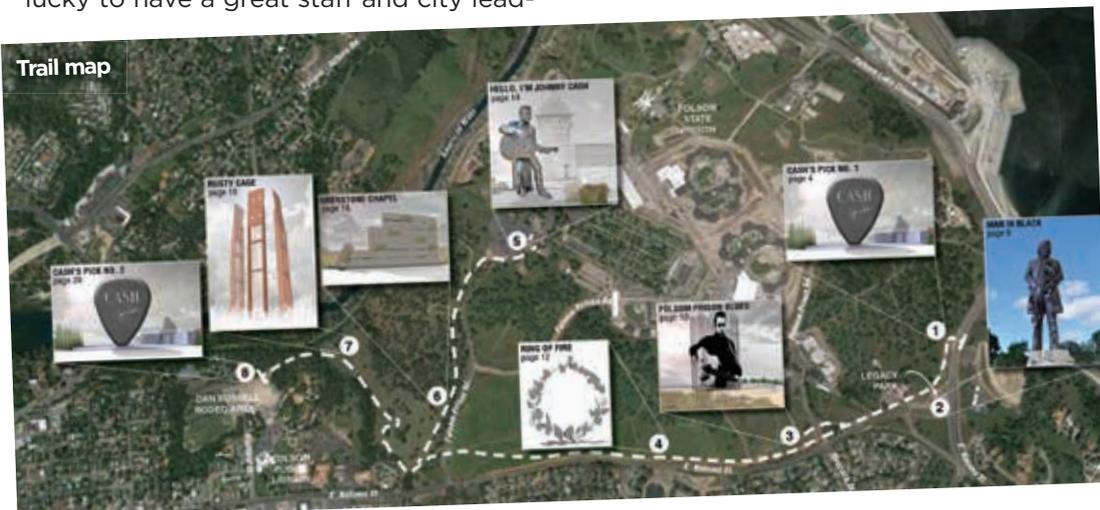
The Johnny Cash Trail Art Experience will be a first-class destination for the millions of Cash fans around the nation and the globe—a place to learn, listen and reflect on one of the greatest musical artists and entertainers in history. ●

**More discussion on the public artwork that's slated to be installed will continue next month in this two-part series. [folsomcasharttrail.com](http://folsomcasharttrail.com)**

### artbeat

Through March 10 - *Through the Trees*.

Taking place at The Gallery at 48 Natoma, this exhibit will feature both fiber art by Marjan Kluepfel as well as glass sculptures by Demetra Theofanous and Dean Bensen. [facebook.com/thegalleryat48natoma](https://facebook.com/thegalleryat48natoma)





# johnny cash trail art experience: part 2

**Stories Told by Sculpture** // by LeeAnn Dickson

Only in Folsom could the Johnny Cash Trail Art Experience happen. Because of two Folsom prison concerts nearly 50 years ago, the city became famous and Cash's professional life changed forever.

The linear public art project is inspired by Cash's performances within Folsom Prison—shows that not only propelled the musician's career to new heights but also humanized the prisoners and brought awareness to their plight.

Cindy Cash, one of Johnny's five children, was an integral part of choosing the artwork that will represent the

Man in Black and his music. Her insights on the personal loves and preferences of her father were invaluable. "She knew what pieces would mean something to her dad," Robert Goss, director of Folsom's Parks and Recreation Department, says.

"It's ironic that after a national call for artists, Romo Studios of Sacramento was chosen for the project," Goss explains. "Adan Romo clearly won...but the park and legacy sculpture proposal from the Fine Art Studio of Rotblatt-Amrany begged to be added to the project too, completing the art trail 'experience.'" Romo, lead artist and designer of the trail artworks, continues: "The trail is like a song...the notes are unified and so are the works of art."

Romo was born and raised in Sacramento. It was his father Jesus, a city firefighter and artist, who inspired him to embrace art. "I followed in my dad's footsteps," the artist says. "I started drawing and sculpting as a child." After receiving a BA in art history from UC Berkeley,

Romo studied extensively in Italy—after being named a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar—and worked under marble artisan Mirio Viviani. After, he attended the Academy of Art in Rome; on his return to the states, he received an MFA in sculpture and installation art from the San Francisco Art Institute. Romo settled in Midtown and renovated an old barn in his backyard into an art studio where, along with working on his art, he offers classes in sculpture, drawing and mosaics.

Romo is excited to create this art experience. "I knew of Cash's music," he explains, "but it was the essence of the man I was going for...pieces to move beyond the music and reflect on him."

Gary Tillery, who works through the Fine Art Studio of Rotblatt-Amrany, designed the centerpiece that was chosen to be the focal point of the guitar-shaped plaza in Legacy Park. The multi-talented Tillery, based out of Chicago, created a unique image of a 40-foot-tall Cash, which will stand on a 10-foot granite base.

In his long and varied career, Tillery served in the U.S. Air Force in the late '60s, worked on an oil rig in Indonesia, co-owned a Chicago-based advertising agency for 20 years, and is also a published author and poet. He started sculpting in his early 40s and has many pieces in public settings throughout the U.S. "I took up art later in life," Tillery admits. "I prefer to minimize details," he explains, "...to suggest and imply rather than show." •

[folsomcasharttrail.com](http://folsomcasharttrail.com)



**artbeat**

March 18-May 5 - **Fine Craftsmanship: Sierra Nevada Fine Furniture Makers Guild.** Taking place at The Gallery at 48 Natoma, this exhibit will feature beautiful furniture crafted by 18 guild members. [facebook.com/thegalleryat48natoma](http://facebook.com/thegalleryat48natoma)

Man in Black rendering by Gary Tillery © The Fine Art Studio of Rotblatt Amrany/Timeless Creations, Inc. All other renderings courtesy of Romo Studios.