Gustave began his marvelous journey on May 27, 1926, in Cleveland, Ohio, the only child of Gustave Falk Sr. and Amanda Pfriem.

Awards a scholarship at the Cleveland School of Art, Falk interrupted his studies to serve in the Philippines, witnessing the surrender between Emperor Hirohito and General MacArthur in September of 1945. Among the first American soldiers to set foot in Japan, he was wounded in action and received a Purple Heart. He remained a year translating every observation and encounter into an image, signing his drawings Gus Okinawa. 

Arriving in New York in 1947, he attended classes at the Museum of Modern Art, and the following year, studied with Willem de Kooning and Josef Albers at the experimental Black Mountain College in Asheville, NC, beginning a lasting friendship with de Kooning. In 1949, an informal artists' group meeting on 8th Street formed The Club. Gustave was a charter member along with the household names de Kooning, Reinhart, Pollack, Motherwell, and Kline. "I was just a kid at the time," Gus said, "but they let me hang around because they liked my drawings."

On the personal advice of de Kooning, Gustave attended the Cleveland Institute of Art to study portraiture with Rolf Stoll. After receiving his BFA, he returned to New York in 1951, studying with Edwin Dickinson. Gus described him as "a very academic painter, who still wears starched collars, skinny black suits and patent leather shoes. He says he enjoys my drawings very much and has taken a personal and professional interest in me. I'm grateful!"

Gus began working professionally as a fashion illustrator in 1953.

"I had a job to do on spec—for Elizabeth Arden. Well, I turned it in and everyone was extremely pleased with it, and now we're all waiting for Miss Arden's decision after her return from the coronation trip (Queen Elizabeth). They accepted the Arden job—rather, Miss Arden liked it very much and gave the final OK. It will be in the October issue of Vogue."

Gustave spent 3 successful years working in New York, before heading to France for a visit with his Uncle Bernard Pfriem in the summer of 1956. Gus said, "Yes, I went for a vacation that lasted 23 years."

In France, Gustave worked for many of the haute couture collections, his drawings appearing in prominent magazines and newspapers. He explained, "I liked it and it was very good for me, but I really didn't care what length this year's dress would be!"

Gustave Falk discovered the world of medical illustration by accident the summer of 1962, in the most literal and unfortunate sense of the word.

He, his wife, and child were in a car accident. All three were hurt, but their 10 month-old daughter sustained the most serious injuries. There were many consultations with doctors, and Gus often came away confused. "I'm not very bright," he explained with a grin, "so, I started drawing." The drawings were based on talks with doctors, and served to clarify the often complex medical information. He was on his way to discover another application for his art—medical illustration. While keeping some of his fashion clients, Gus began to receive more and more medical assignments. His medical drawings incorporated his fine art training, draftsmanship, and talent in a unique way, establishing him as one of the world's finest medical artists.

In 1978, Gustave attended his first Association of Medical Illustrators (AMI) meeting in Milwaukee, WI. With portfolio in hand, he met many AMI members, initiating an ongoing collaboration and many friendships.

New York again became his home from 1979 to 1991, where he taught at the City University of New York (CUNY) and the College of New Rochelle. He also found time to give lectures, workshops, and seminars at the University of Illinois at Chicago's Biomedical Visualization Department, AMI meetings, and the Mayo Clinic, among others.

"A Gus Falk presentation means outstanding and original content, as well as one-on-one attention. I have rarely seen life drawing instruction offered with such enthusiasm and feedback."

—Al Tosti

"His insight, humor, charming irreverence, and validating support endeared him to everyone. We should all be so lucky to hold as much courage and conviction in ourselves as Gus had in each of us."

—Endt Hariton

Gustave continued to freelance for clientele ranging from pharmaceutical giants to medical journals and publishing houses. An internationally recognized educator, the later years of his career gave him the opportunity to become the director of two art schools in France from 1991 to 1997.

Gustave retired in the south of France in the Luberon, and closed his eyes for the last time on February 14, 2011.