

## Thomas Grønbukt – Artist Bio

In Norway, mountains cover 70 percent of the land. The coastline is deeply indented, and rugged mountains rise abruptly from the sea. The highest peaks are in a south central mountain group called Jotunheimen, "Home of the Giants," a name that discloses the country's deep-seated affinity for mythic creatures and the landscapes they inhabit. It is also a place where Thomas Grønbukt has spent considerable time, both as a mountain guide and as an artist.

Thomas Grønbukt was born March 29, 1970, in Sarpsborg, a small town in southeast Norway. Up until Thomas was 10 years of age, the family moved every two years due to his father's position as an Air force pilot. Most of these moves kept the family close to Oslo and Trondheim, except for a two-year stint in Canada. Eventually, they settled in the very south of Norway in a small town on the coast.



Grønbukt grew up captivated both by the varied landscapes surrounding him and by the folk tales they had inspired for centuries. Ever since he can remember, he has spent time both drawing and painting. Grønbukt won his first drawing competition at age 6, sold his first watercolor landscapes at age 10 and went on to win a Norwegian national drawing competition at age 14.

Since he was four years old, Grønbukt has hiked and skied cross-country through the Norwegian mountain ranges, leading a life of travel and adventure that continues to this day. He has traversed India, Nepal, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Sumatra, Bali, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and the United States. "I also traveled around Europe, and spent a season skiing in the Alps," he notes, which gives the 34-year-old an impressive world of experience upon which to draw.

For eight seasons Grønbukt has worked in the National Parks of Norway. "Most of those years I worked as a mountain guide. I would take people mountaineering, ice climbing, glacier hiking, climbing and caving," he reports. During this time, he supplemented his income by selling his paintings of the surrounding areas and by hanging an occasional exhibition.

"I always create art when I travel. I typically do watercolors, pen and ink, color pencil and small acrylic paintings. I've also spent a lot of time on photography. At a cabin in the National Park in Norway, I had time to do a lot of plein air paintings, including some on the glaciers. I like to get to those remote places you have to hike to and then paint from

there. There's just something special about the light and colors when you get up above the tree line and have the mountain ranges surrounding you."

Rock climbing is still one of his favorite activities. Grønbukt, who now resides in California with his wife, is a locally competitive climber and boulderer, but "Very low key," he emphasizes. "Climbing brings you to areas you would often not go. I also have a love for [painting] mountains and rock that is partly because of my love for climbing." His every pigmented boulder and sheer rock face are interpretive evidence that he knows his subject in a very physical and therefore, literally sensual, way.

From his earliest work onward, landscape dramas have been a key focus of his art. One of Grønbukt's first commissions came from publishers of Norwegian folk tales. A natural pairing of talents since his earliest memories is of his father reading to him from books with extraordinary pictures of trolls by turn-of-the-century Norwegian illustrators. "My only inheritance," he laughs, "is a large book of illustrations by Norwegian artist, T.H. Kittelsen."



A July Day oil on canvas 12" x 24"

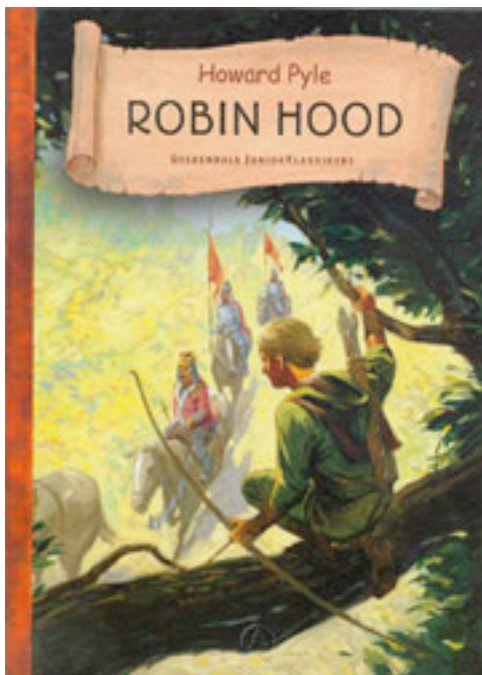
Many other illustrators influenced Grønbukt's childhood in the form of comics by Frazetta, Will Eisner, and Bernie Wrightson. In addition to the classic Norwegian fairytales, he sought out similar fairytales from China and Japan.

As a young boy he read Grimm's Fairytales, 1001 Nights, Aesop's fables, Peer Gynt and all of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis' books. His fascination for trolls, fairies and the like, combined with his love of nature, led Grønbukt to the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, where he began his formal art studies in 1998.

Grønbukt started painting in oil, acrylic and pastels six years ago. His color choices infuse his landscapes with an emotional dimension that runs from breezy to intense. He credits his mother, a fabric designer, with laying the foundation for his sense of color and design. "She was always focused on color harmony, warms and cools," he remembers. Along the way she taught him sewing, knitting and weaving, and together they developed a tradition of painting Ukrainian Easter eggs. Later, in her forties, she studied sculpting, painting, metal arts and printmaking. "She still does quilting and woodworking," he says, "But I leave that entirely up to her."

Grønbukt struck out on his own at age 19, studying for a year in mountainous central Norway at a school for outdoor life. He then spent his mandatory year in the Norwegian military, followed by a few years in Oslo (1991-1994) where he attended the Merkantile Institute to study graphic design. Grønbukt also worked for several years as an art teacher at a school for brain-damaged children aged 4-18. Since 1994, he has worked seasonally in Norway's national parks and continues to spend a few months working in Norway every year. The rest of the year he usually spends traveling.

"Wherever I go, I love to render the landscapes. Every place in the world has its own unique light and look. The geography of a place can be similar to another location, but most are separate and distinct. I love to try and capture that uniqueness with my paintings. I want a viewer who has traveled there to recognize that place in my art and to be transported back to it from observing my paintings. And if they have yet to go there, it is my hope that my art would ignite in them the desire to see that place for themselves. "I love to collect and capture all of these different places in the world. As an example, I have close friends in the wine country, specifically in Ukiah, that own a vineyard. For the last year or two I have developed an interest in landscapes around the area. The rolling hills with gold fields and clusters of oak trees and the lush vineyards embedded there, make for rich colorful landscapes with interesting design. I am also fond of painting California seascapes. And like so many artists before me, I am captivated and enthralled by the scenes in Yosemite."



Bookcover design by the artist

My paintings are like a travel diary of where I have been and the powerful influence a particular place has had on me. "I think we all wish we could freeze exquisite scenes or moments in time when we experience contentment, joy or awe. I hope that through my landscapes, I can return to the viewer to that place and to those feelings."

Since graduating in the fall 2001, Grønbukt has decided to make the United States his home and to pursue his fine art while serving as a drawing and painting instructor at The Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

He has also just completed a set of book covers for several Gold Classics -- Robin Hood and The Hunchback of Notre Dame, among others -- for a Norwegian publishing company. And Grønbukt has "loose plans" to publish a collection of classic stories with his illustrations.

## **EXHIBITIONS, PRIVATE & PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

Louis Aronow Galleries, San Francisco & Sausalito, CA	2004
James Harold Galleries, Tahoe City, CA & The Resort at Squaw Creek, Olympic Valley, CA 2004	2004
Chip Express Art Competition, Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA	2004
Exhibition Poster. 12th Annual Norway Day 2004 Exhibition, San Francisco, CA	2004
Norway Day Art Exhibition, San Francisco, CA	2003, 2004
Norwegian Club, San Francisco, CA, Permanent Collection	2004
Norwegian Consulate, San Francisco, Permanent Collection	2002, 2003, 2004
Whitehouse Vineyards, Ukiah, CA, Permanent Collection	2003, 2004
W Hotel Exhibition, San Francisco, CA	2003
Academy of Art University, Faculty Shows, San Francisco, CA	2002, 2003
Academy of Art Spring Show, San Francisco, CA	1998, 2000, 2001, 2002
Presidio Alliance Show, San Francisco, CA	2000
National Parks Exhibition, Leirvassbu, Norway	1998, 1999, 2000, 2001

## **AWARDS**

Winner, Best Advanced Illustration, Academy of Art, San Francisco	2001, 2002
Society of Illustrators Competition entrant	2000, 2001

## **PUBLICATIONS**

	2003, 2004
Gyldendal Forlag, Publishers, Norway -- Children's book illustrations including Robin Hood, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Around the World in 80 Days, Ivanhoe & The Snow Dragon	