The world is stock.

voiceover: This presentation is loosely organized into three sections:
1. Intro & definitions
2. The context we’re designing in
3. What designers need to be equipped

section 1: Intro & definitions
The world is stock, or so it often seems. Globalization and the networked economy; technology and mass media; Google.
voiceover: There is an overabundance of assets to mix and sample.
voiceover: ... software tools and a proliferation of raw content online ...
voiceover: Every possible communication vehicle has been prepackaged and made readily available, from logos to bumper stickers.
voiceover: Graphic designers have a lot to do. Patternmaking and pattern-perceiving. Shaping the ways we communicate with each other...
voiceover: ...and navigate our increasingly cluttered environments. (As the mother of a 1-year-old, chaos has new meaning to me now.)
Read culture:

voiceover: So what do designers do? Look at cultural context, sensorial or cognitive cues, the media landscape...
Read culture: hunt

voiceover: ...world events, pop culture...
Read culture:

hunt

gather

voiceover: ...audience needs, audience values, client goals...
Read culture:  
hunt  
gather  
consume

voiceover: Every designer I know is also some kind of fetishist or collector.
Read culture:  
  hunt  
gather  
consume  
publish  

voiceover: What goes in must come out . . . blogs, seasonal greetings, papers, books, magazines. The tradition of designers as authors has been accelerated by technology and software tools.
voiceover: These special pins for entymologists’ specimen-collecting remind me of aspects of design: curiosity, exactitude, studying real life, the thrill of the chase, an element of surprise.
“Graphic” originally derived from the Greek word *graphein* “write.”

**voiceover:** From entymology to etymology . . . it’s interesting to remember the origin of “graphic” in writing, when mulling the SoTs question “what’s so graphic about graphic design?”

Note: See “graphic” entry in etymonline.com.

1610, “traced” (implied in graphical), from L. graphicus “picturesque,” from Gk. graphikos “of or for writing, belonging to drawing, picturesque,” from graphe “writing, drawing,” from graphein “write,” originally “to scratch” on clay tablets with a stylus. Meaning “of or pertaining to drawing” is from 1756; that of “vivid” is from 1669, on the notion of words that produce the effect of a picture.
explicit
pictorial
photographic
colorful
definite
descriptive
expressive
readable
slice of life

voiceover: Roget’s New Millennium Thesaurus includes nineteen results for “graphic” of which these are a handful. Graphic design, beyond mechanical drawing, is design that brings ideas to life.
The algebra of design.

voiceover: Algebra is the mathematics of relationships. And there are many variables in graphic design equations.
intuition
+
seduction
+
distillation
+
craft
+
wild card

voiceover: Gut + heart+ boiling down ... and end-user contribution
pragmatics
+
ability to surprise and delight

voiceover: budget / schedule + zeitgeist + client’s message + market pressures + personal filter
nitty-gritty + touchy-feely

voiceover: In the end, graphic design is a combination of grounded and functional plus sensorial, symbolic and conceptual.

Design communicates ideas, pushes buttons, inspires actions.
section 2: The context we’re designing in Design has become a buzzword from mainstream to business arena. Greater integration of design into everyday life (though understood mostly as fashion, housewares and beautification).
Customize me.

**voiceover:** Aesthetic choices surround us from ring tones to online photo albums to Evites to avatars to personal web pages to sneakers to cars to coffee.
voiceover: Customization is everywhere. Not just in menus of preset choices but also idiosyncratic expressive outbursts.
It’s all about choice

voiceover: Mass niche, online auctions, the Long Tail, TiVo. Too many products, options, channels.
It’s all about choice and voice.

voiceover: Personal web pages and BLOGs, wikis...
voiceover: Our world is filled with heightened self-consciousness and exhibitionism. A large percentage of American teens believe they will be famous one day.
Design is increasingly popular and populist.

voiceover: Mass co-creation and DIY. Culture of celebrity. Rampant narcissism. Speed of adoption and the search for newness means constant and concurrent style recycling.
the voices are telling me to kill you

voiceover: Social networking, user-generated content. MySpace, YouTube and reality TV.
F/X everywhere.

voiceover: We’re constantly surrounded by noise. Competing messages tend toward hyperbole in form as well as content.
voiceover: Is the sky falling? From Gutenberg to the advent of the PC and internet, doomsayers have focused on ends rather than beginnings: The decay of the practice of rhetoric, the end of print; the end of the :30 spot; the end of libraries as we used to know them.

(Launch of SpaceShipOne, 2004)
The world is stock but not everything is turnkey or formulaic.
Evolutionary pressures: automation, stronger tools for DIY, ever-increasing speed of delivery

voiceover: Note to self: be resourceful, do your homework, create with intelligence and feeling. Don’t pursue novelty for its own sake.
Craft.
Some things confound all short cuts.

voiceover: For example, a well-designed book; a beautiful postage stamp; wayfinding that works; a usable users manual.
voiceover: I’m talking not just about formal craft but also the craft of ideas.

(Guatemala: burst sewage pipe under Guatemala City, February 2007)
voiceover: It’s a common challenge these days to piece together consistent results out of multiple teams parallel-pathing across media.
Survival skills:
contribute content,
know your space-time continuum,
understand business realities,
practice cross-functional thinking

voiceover: Embrace details, be adaptable. The ability to translate between worlds & zoom out to see a bigger picture is of critical importance. Learn how to sketch in different ways to communicate effectively.
Train truffle hounds. Cultivate innate grasp of sensory experiences and cultural trends.

voiceover: Fieldwork is essential. Curiosity. Exposure to strategic debate. Participation in design or pre-design research that is generative in nature.
And please don’t forget about typography.
Mental food pyramids. Critical thinkers are not fed on mental Twinkies alone.

Upstream amphibians. Interesting sandboxes exist for those willing to venture into new territory.

voiceover: Harness the designer’s grasp of expressive potential. The design POV (of makers, creators) is a valuable addition to discussions that often happen before a designer’s engagement:
- strategy/planning
- qualitative research
- marketing
voiceover: Design output includes creating tools by which end-users themselves participate in design.
Idealistic realist’s wish list:
1. A new international movement

voiceover: Since I find myself described as a “realist with ideals,” I wanted to close with my wish list.

First, a new international movement. Not striking down formal models but looking to address transnational rallying cries such as global warming, poverty, child mortality, human rights . . .
Idealistic realist’s wish list:
1. A new international movement
2. Slow + design

voiceover: Second, slow design: “Examining and developing the design implications of the Slow Model, both aesthetic and semantic, with the objective of cultivating quality.” A seminar on this topic took place in Milan in October 2006, supported by the Slow Food Movement, the University of Gastronomic Sciences, the European Institute of Design and Domus Academy.

voiceover: Looking out at the horizon there are bright spots and dark spots, shiny objects and challenges. Graphic designers can and will play an active role in evolving the discipline. To reiterate: Graphic designers today need to be generalists as well as specialists able to drill down into the depths of content and context; facile in cross-functional design thinking; able to converse and collaborate with people in diverse roles.

“Technologies change, practices change but humanity doesn’t.” – Elizabeth Churchill, Yahoo! Research (fellow Art Center Media Design Program Brain Trust member)
A note on the type (from Wikipedia):
Arial, sometimes marketed as Arial MT, is a neo-grotesque sans-serif typeface and computer font packaged with Microsoft Windows, other Microsoft software applications, Apple Mac OS X, and many PostScript computer printers. The typeface was designed in 1982 by Robin Nicholas and Patricia Saunders for Monotype Typography. It is generally understood that Arial was meant as a cheaper substitute for (but not so close as to invite litigation) Linotype’s popular Helvetica. However, a close examination of Helvetica, Arial, and Univers reveals that the latter two are in many respects more similar than the former two. Most of the more striking differences between Arial and Helvetica are actually common to Arial and Univers; the angled tail of the “1”, the absence of a tail on the “g”, and the angled top of the “t” are good examples.

voiceover: I wanted to learn something about the font that I so often resort to in Microsoft Word or PowerPoint documents that must live across platforms.
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voiceover: All of us pull information and assets too easily from the internet and other media. Here are sources for most of the images shown in this presentation.

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thanks to my sounding boards:
Gino Lee
Nikhil Mitter
Markus Brilling
Sojin Kim