"If it's not sustainable, it's not design; it's a crime against humanity," said Susan Szenasy, keynote speaker at FIT's fourth annual Sustainable Business and Design Conference. Szenasy is editor in chief of the architecture and design magazine Metropolis, which has sponsored the Next Generation Design Competition since 2003. The contest awards $10,000 to young creatives with progressive design ideas that incorporate "systems thinking, sustainability, accessibility, materials exploration, historic relevance, and technology." In her talk, Szenasy discussed past competition winners and her values. Afterward, she sat down for a chat.

"Your carbon footprint, you moved into a 1,000-square-foot Village loft designed by Harry Allen. What makes it size and materials. Everything is made of natural fibers, woven antique rugs from Turkey and Morocco. I just have V, and every light bulb is fluorescent."

"The most exciting green products out there right now? how, Interface, Milliken—the Georgia-based carpet company has been upgrading themselves for a decade now. moving PVC from carpet backing, using less material in carpets, and they now have the ability to recycle the old return it into the material stream, which saves them using virgin fiber, therefore using less fossil fuel."

"Remember of the advisory group for FIT's new MA in Sustainable Interior Environments. Will these interiors be as well as sustainable? If they aren't, they won't be green. Design has a very bad track record in terms of cutting costs, and what happens to them at the end of their lives. —Alexander Gelfand"

"When you cut a pattern out of cloth, the excess usually winds up in a landfill. But designer Mark Liu created a series of garments that use the entire piece of fabric, eliminating waste. The skincare brand Pangea Organics manufactures products with 100 percent organic ingredients. We study these and other firms' sustainable practices in my course, International Corporate Responsibility. We start by examining the United Nations' Global Compact, a set of principles for businesses committed to human rights, labor standards, the environment, and anti-corruption. Our students are preparing to become global managers, and some are more capitalistic than others. So we'll have debates about child labor, for example. One student will say, "It's unethical to have 14-year-olds working eight hours a day just to get a lower price," and another will say, "Well, when I was 14, I worked." I tell them to research a company's core values when applying for jobs. Patagonia, for example, has transparent business practices. Every style sold on the company's site is linked to an interactive diagram, showing how it was designed, manufactured, and shipped. Consumers can decide for themselves whether the item's carbon footprint is too large. I tell students that these days, with Twitter and Facebook, the customer has a voice. Therefore, it's in the best interest of businesses to be mindful of what's happening throughout their supply chain and the product's lifecycle. Firms should ask themselves, "How are we contributing to economic and environmental sustainability and social justice?"

Musa is also a 1994 graduate of IIT.

"The 2010 Next Generation award winner created a brick using a process that binds together sand, common bacteria, and urine (found in urine) into a mass that resembles sandstone but can be as strong as marble. Producing "bio-brick" instead of regular brick would release less carbon dioxide into the air—a difference equal to the amount created annually by all the airplanes in the world."