

***(toxins of the affluent)**

By Sheri Rysdam

Grimy faced toddlers grin up
from piles of carbon black,
circuit boards, and toner
—poison plus poverty equals

carcinogenic inhalation of
acidic vapors,
green and purple smoke
taken while harvesting rice

where water is something like
twenty-four thousand times the threshold.

Retardants impregnate
the unregulated
acid strippers,
bearing our toxic burden,
in Guiyu.

Dioxins dictate US rejects
and free trade is
sterile riverbanks,
charred skeletons of ashen
toner, blackening
waterways not for drinking.

**The United States currently has a policy of shipping electronic waste to impoverished countries where the toxins slowly kill the land and the people. This is all despite the Basel Convention, an agreement ensuring that countries dispose of their own electronic waste within their own borders. Although the United States has signed this agreement, we continue to ship out our waste. The Chinese town of Guiyu is a popular destination. There, workers are paid to disassemble the parts and dispose of the waste. Guiyu, once a bucolic farming community, is now littered with electronic waste and clean water has to be shipped in.*