04/27 Reading Response 6 – Architectures Labor

From the Brown reading, one theme that spoke to me in overlapping subjected labor involved in producing architecture and the object of architecture itself is Browns statement regarding Anne Cheng’s terms referring to modernism on p. 207;

“…’three functional, distinctive categories’’– the animal the human, and the mechanical– which, despite their ‘ideological separation’, were often rendered as ‘stylistically identical’ in modernist aesthetics. Modernism’s interest in this trio, I would add originates in the much longer historical preoccupation with solving the representational idle of the worker, conceived of simultaneously as an abstract surplus, a less -evolved species, a machine to be industrially optimized, and a catalyst for a future proletarian consciousness.”

When reading this excerpt from the text, I can’t help but to draw connections to Deamer’s piece regarding the categorizations of work and labor by way of economics and also identity. The architect has always been an unacknowledged laborer but also a catalyst for societal progression. It is interesting to put the architect into each role within this system of categories, especially with the modern term of “CAD Monkey” – an animalistic character and mechanical worker of whom produces a surplus of CAD drawings within a small amount of time, oftentimes overworked and unacknowledged. In the same instance as the racial argument, the characteristics of the “CAD-monkey” are attributed to their naturality, like as Deamer stated, this isn’t their professional work, but rather their passion or their craft, one might say, “who they really are”. It is interesting to read through the history of unionization efforts for the architect and to today realize that little to no progress has been made. I am unsure of what this means for this type of laborer or for the future of this practice. Have we really ever broken free from labor categorizations, and if not would we be able to without dismantling the current labor system as we know it?