



Using Aedicules as Top-Lighting

The term “aedicule” is derived from ancient Rome and is typically a small shrine or construction designed in the form of a building. Through the ages, aedicules have been employed by architects as design influences to add form and dimension to buildings for added impact and esthetics.

The Place des Arts in Montreal, Canada’s most unique cultural complex, took the aedicules concept one step further.

With its vast underground facilities, the Place des Arts wanted to filter daylight into subterranean spaces while enhancing its architecturally significant exterior esplanade areas. Designers came up with an aedicules concept that would consist of a series of small skylight structures created to be visually distinctive and provide effective top-lighting into the underground interiors.

We think this approach is brilliant!

Aedicules as top-lighting are advantageous as they admit more light per unit area than windows, and can distribute it more evenly over a designated space. Other benefits include the reduced dependence on electrical lighting and resulting energy cost reductions, the enabling of greater privacy than vertical windows due to top placement, and the fact that overhead light from a skylight also reduces glare by bringing more balanced light into deeper spaces, thereby creating a more inviting and open feel in inner spaces.

Unicel Architectural fabricated and installed five aedicules of 10’ wide x 10’ long x 9’ high (3m x 3m x 2.8m) and a separate skylight structure for Place des Arts. The Unicel aedicules have become part of Montreal’s distinctive architectural scene. They allow natural light to enter deep into the underground building and workspaces below, while respecting the outdoor landscaping design.

[Read the case study](#)