

Composition Case Study #12

ADVANCED COMPOSITION

This is a pretty interesting picture that caught my eye. It follows some traditional rules of composition, while at the same time effectively breaking others.

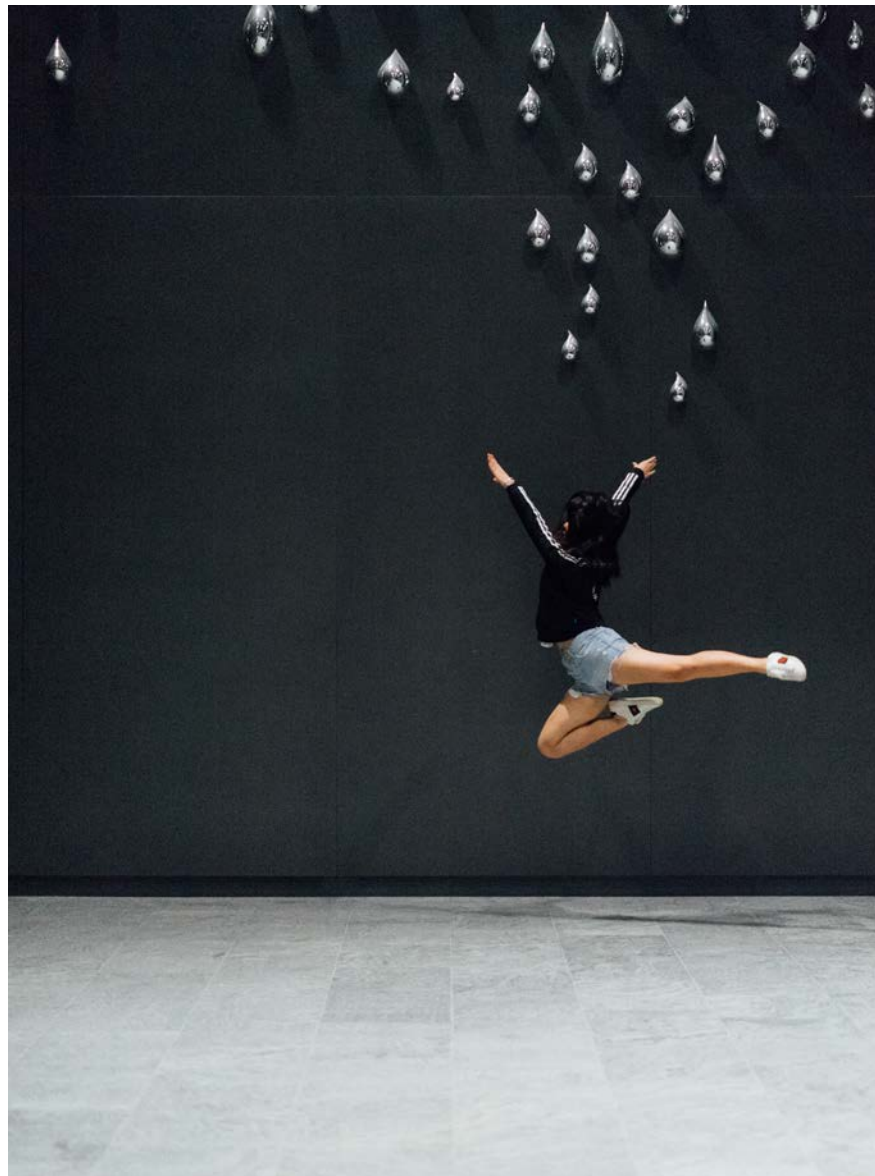
One of the elements that really makes this image shine is the positioning of the model.

The world does not stand still.

When composing top-notch imagery, it's critical that a photographer develops a keen sense of timing.

This is a great example of timing at work in photography.

The real question with this image is around the use of space.

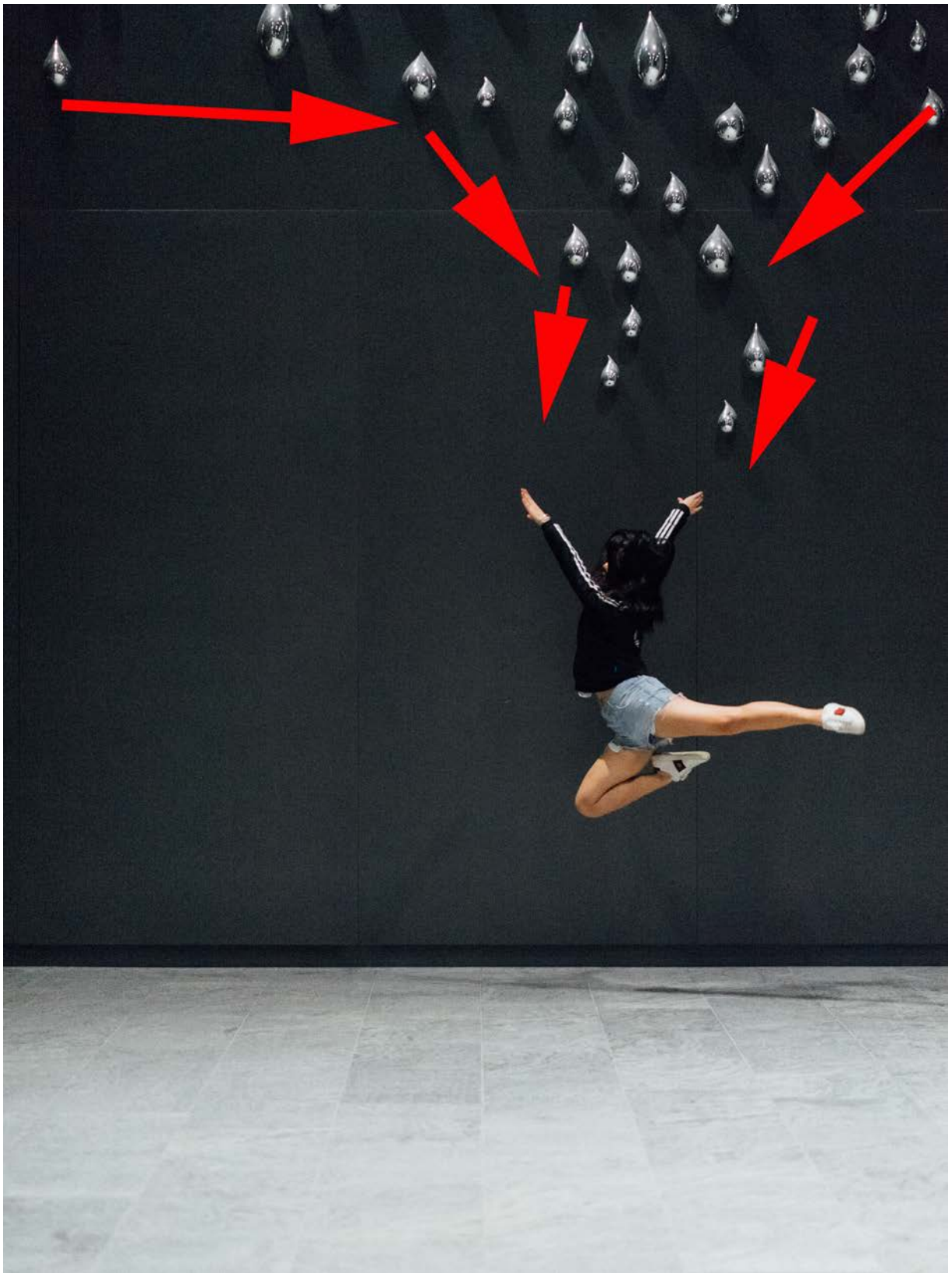




I have placed a green overlay onto the image. You can see that the photographer was very close in setting up the 1/3–2/3 concept – close enough that I think it counts.

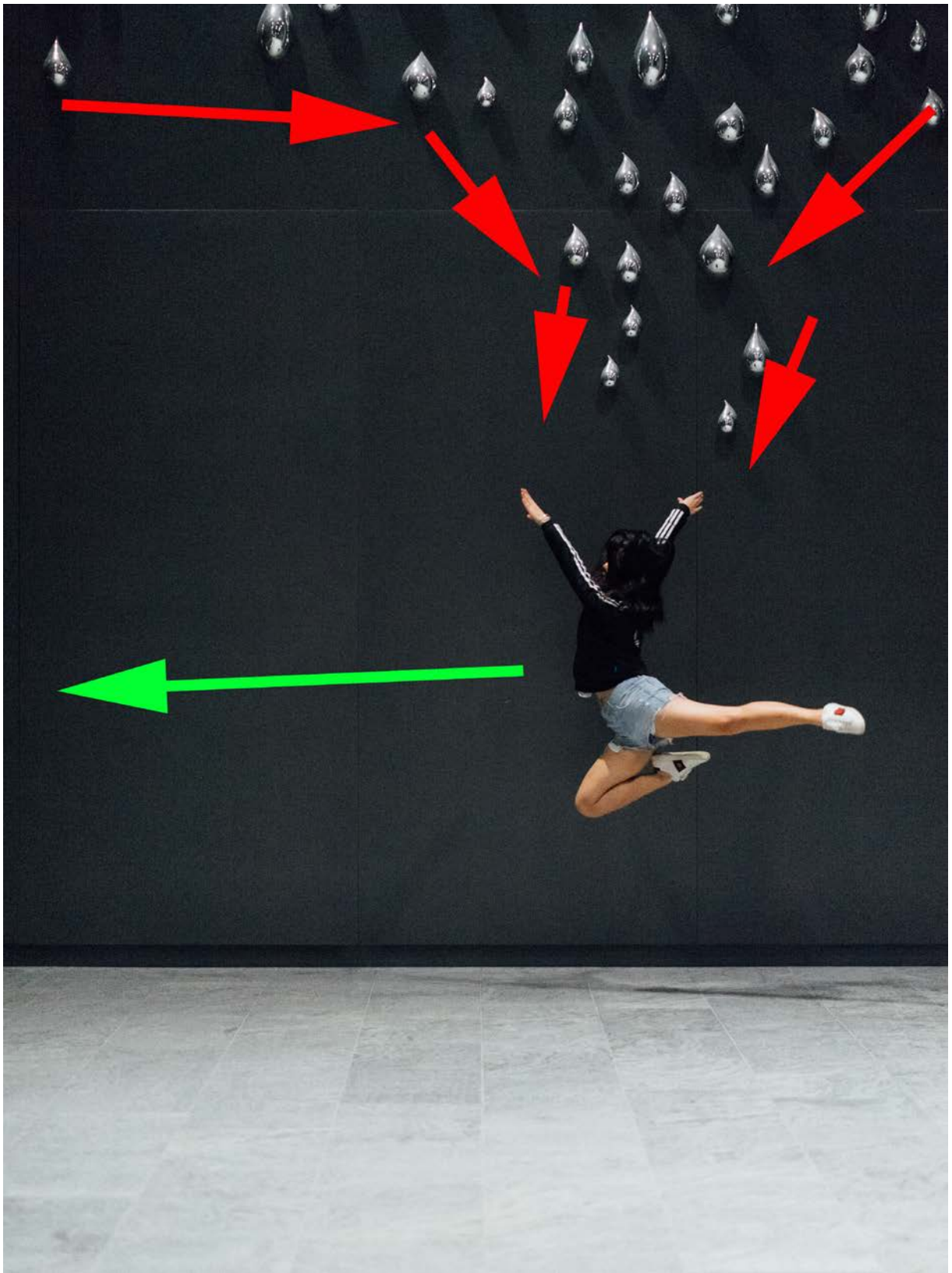
When one examines this shot, you really can't help but wonder if perhaps there is too much negative space to the bottom and to the left.

Let's break the composition down further.



This is actually a very clever use of leading lines.

It also required skill in the execution, because the model had to be in just the right spot while displaying just the right pose.



In composition we often discuss the concepts of line of sight and frame breaks.

With frame breaks, we don't want a subject that is moving off frame.

This photograph handles both of those concepts well through the positioning of the model within the space.



Our subject is clearly the model, which means everything else is negative space.

We've already established that the metal water droplets along the wall create leading lines toward our subject.

This negative space is of value. It is supporting the subject.

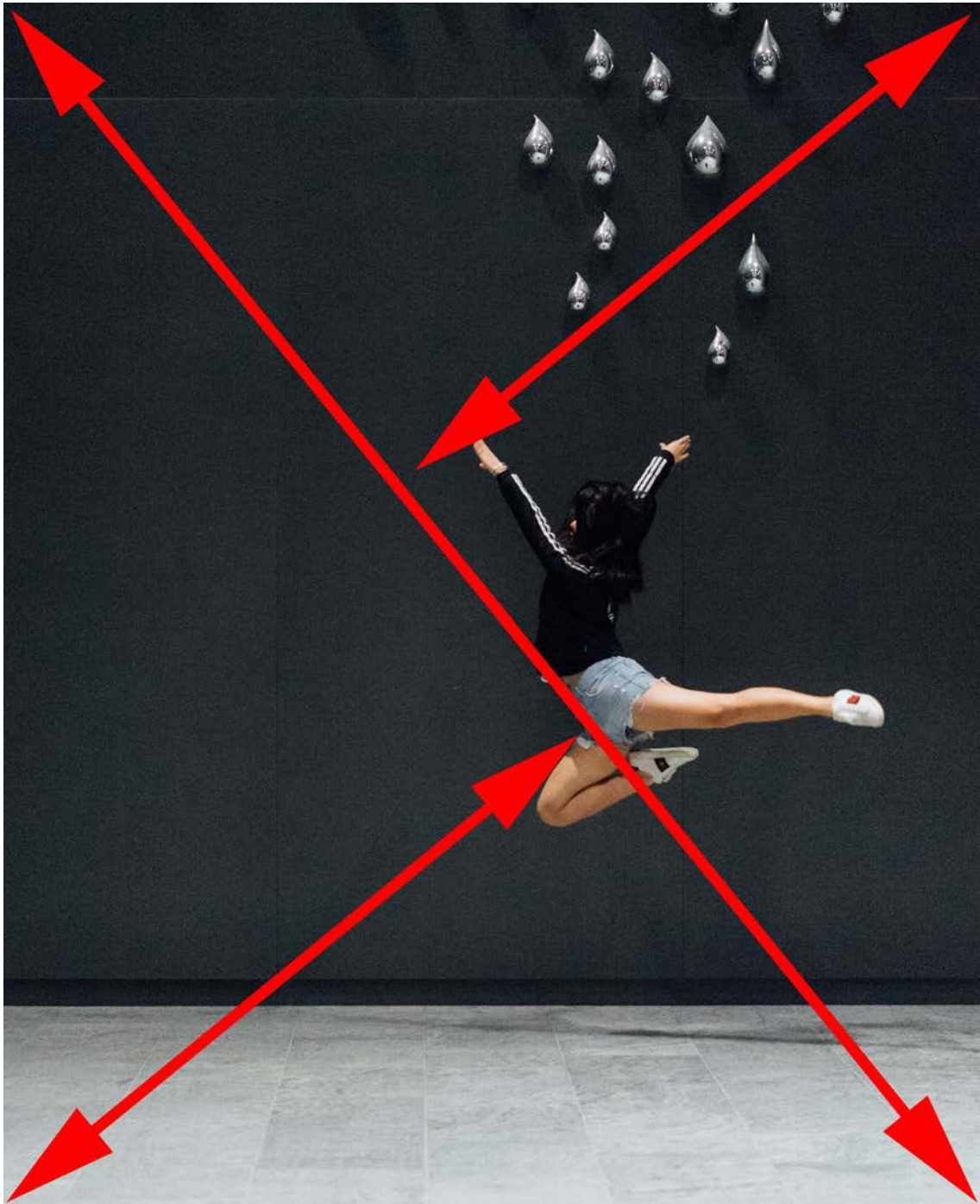
Let's look at the division of space within the frame.



It's at this point that the structure of the picture starts to come into question.

Using the traditional divisions of space, including the Rule of Thirds, the Golden Ratio, the Golden

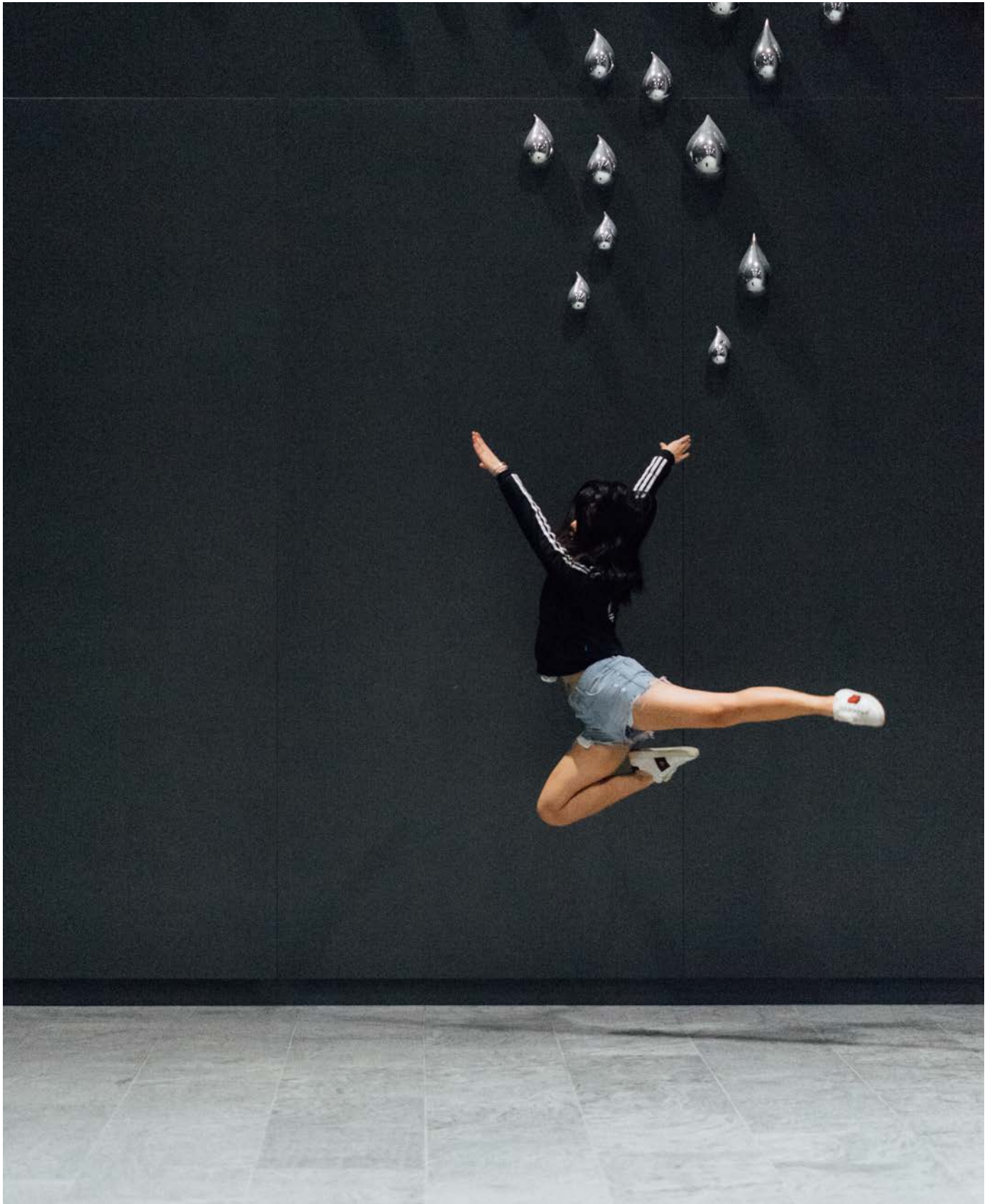
Spiral, and the Golden Triangle, the only one that "sort of" works is the Golden Triangle, as seen in the image above.



By cropping the original frame, we can create a better placement of the subject within the space using the Golden Triangle.

..... The question becomes...

Does that create a better picture?



Here is the image after being cropped.

..... Her placement is better within the space.
..... However, we lose the flow of the leading lines.



On the left is the original shot, and on the right is the cropped version.

Neither, in my opinion, could be labeled as completely right or wrong.

The one on the right (the cropped version) follows the "rules" of subject placement better than the original version.

However, I think it loses something.

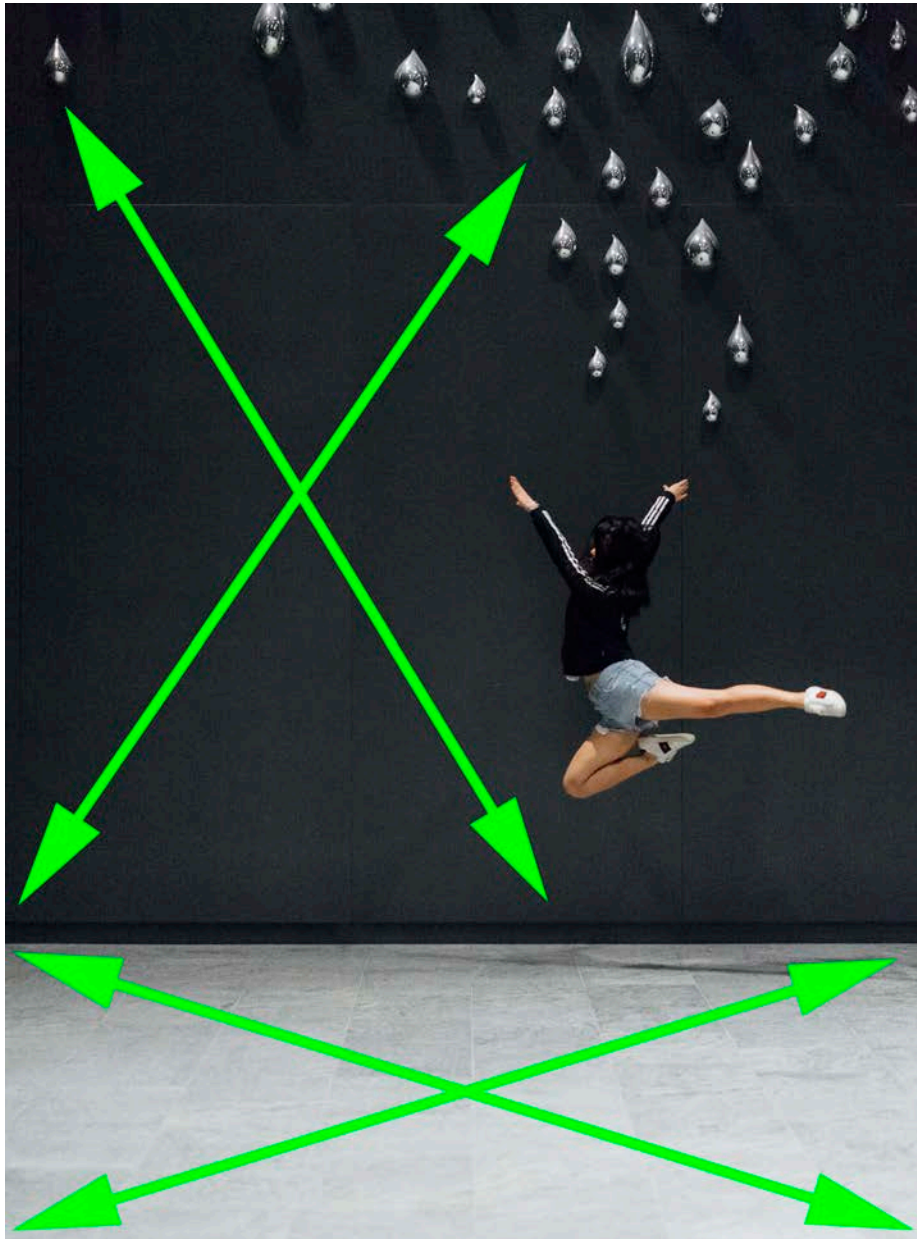
As photographers (artists), we have to identify our intent and try to transpose that intent to a viewer.

I think the photographer used the wall sculpture to transpose the intent of music and motion to which his model then leaped, adding to the idea.

With the cropped version, the intent becomes lost.

Does that mean that, in this case, less-than-ideal placement works better?

I think it does.



If we are studying the work of others, we don't always have the benefit of inside knowledge as to why an image was created the way it was.

If you're creating work for commercial purposes, you still need to think like an artist. However, you have to plan for the needs of the commercial environment.

This image "rings" of commercial use.

It illustrates a clear idea and a message.

It can be cropped any number of ways and still be successful.

Typical buyers for commercial photography would be graphic designers, web designers, and art directors. One requirement that they often need is an area to place copy over an image.

These areas work best when they are free of clutter.

The areas highlighted by the green arrows in the image above indicate several perfect places where copy could be placed.



Imagine that you have been tasked to design a cover for a brochure. The brochure is for a college of art and design.

The college teaches all of the arts, from fine art to dance.

Can you see it? The possibilities for this picture come alive!