



Brushes with Conflict: The Utah Premiere of *God Kinda Looks Like Tupac*• by Emilio Rodriguez

Description

Ogden, UT *God Kinda Looks Like Tupac* is a captivating exploration of the interplay between artistic expression and educational ambition. Written by **Emilio Rodriguez** and directed by **Alicia Washington**, this play explores the high-stakes world of high school academia, where personal and professional pressures collide.

Set in a high school art classroom in Detroit before 2016, the play revolves around Garrett (**Cory Clarke**), an art teacher eager to secure the Teacher of the Year award. His hopes rest on the student symposium, and he's confident that his pupil, Corinne (**Wendy Joseph**), has the talent to clinch the prize. However, when Corinne's artwork challenges Garrett's expectations by choosing an unconventional subject for her art project, the conflict intensifies, forcing both teacher and student to confront their own values and ambitions.



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God Kinda Looks Like Tupac Program

Early on in the play, Garrett laments to his co-worker, Karina, that "it is impossible to get nominated for anything here because I'm white," underscoring a poignant moment of self-pity and disconnection from the majority of his students' experiences as a teacher in Detroit. This comment highlights a broader issue of privilege and entitlement, contrasting sharply with his ability to engage meaningfully with his students' creative choices.

Corinne is initially excited by the prospect of being chosen for the competition; however, when she receives pushback for the painting she has created and is instead encouraged to focus on a safe topic like Rosa Parks, she loses interest. Frustrated, Garrett responds, "Why are my ideas bad?" Corinne responds, "Because they are not mine." The above moment reveals a fundamental disconnect: the teacher's approach is more about enforcing his own vision than fostering genuine dialogue.

"Why are my ideas bad?" Garrett

"Because they are not mine." Corinne

God Kinda Looks Like Tupac

Such a dynamic is reminiscent of Paulo Freire's critique in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, where education is reduced to the "banking" concept: an exchange where the teacher deposits information into passive students who merely receive and regurgitate it. Rather than nurturing critical thinking and mutual understanding, the teacher's role becomes a series of one-way communications, failing to engage with the student's individuality and creative autonomy.

In the show's climax, Garrett snaps in a desperate attempt to get what he wants from Corinne; Garrett verbally abuses Corinne in a completely unacceptable manner that is honestly hard to watch and listen to because the actors do such a great job setting up the story and making it feel real.

Corinne responds in a beautiful way, using Tupac's words.

And since we all came from a woman
Got our name from a woman and our game from a woman
I wonder why we take from our women
Why we rape our women, do we hate our women?
Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why?
I think it's time to kill for our women
Time to heal our women, be real to our women
And if we don't, we'll have a race of babies
That will hate the ladies that make the babies
And since a man can't make one

He has no right to tell a woman when and where to create one
So will the real men get up?
I know youâ??re fed up, ladies, but keep ya head up
â??Tupacâ?? â??Keep Ya Head Upâ?•

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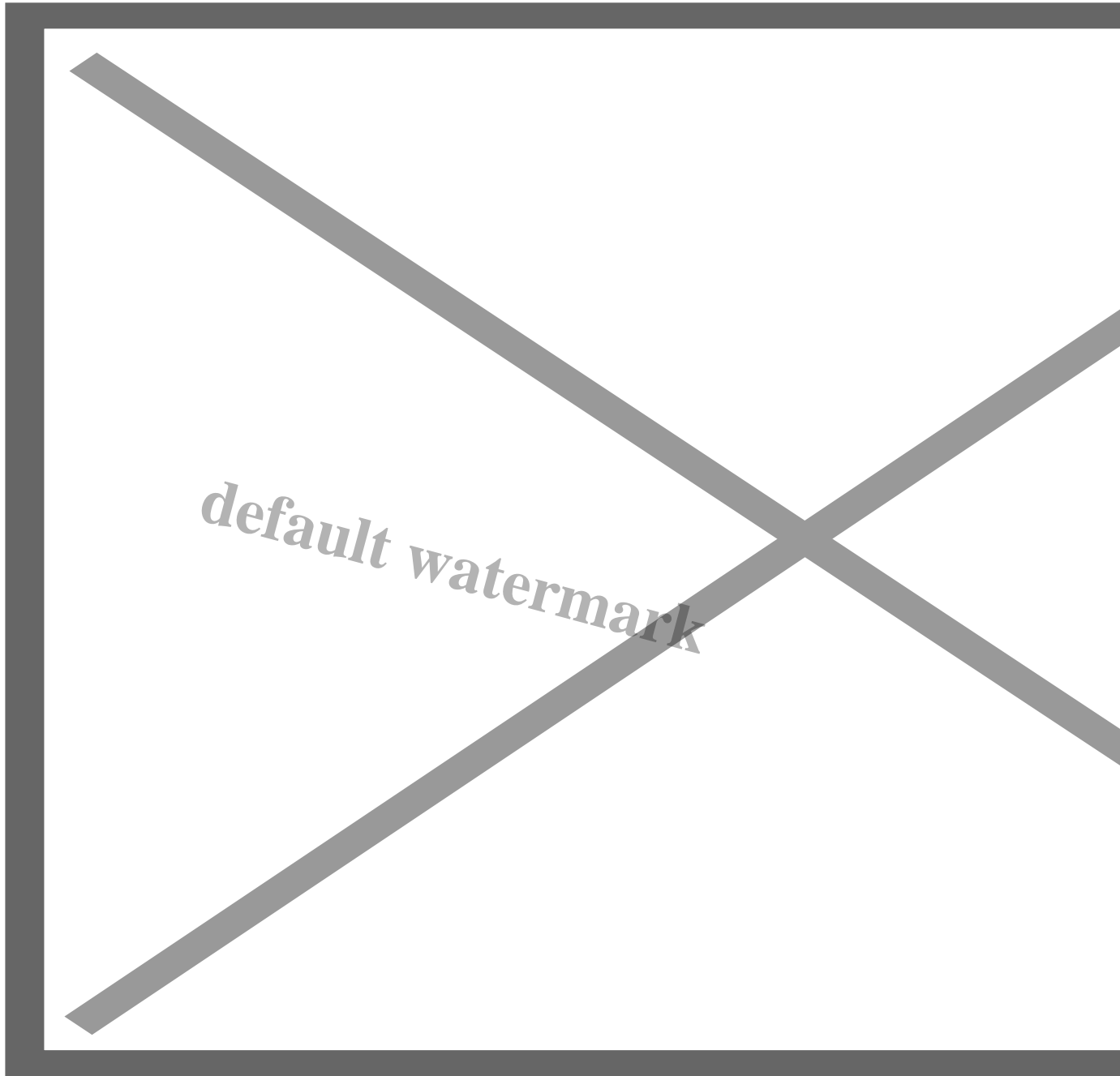
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The cast delivers outstanding performances, with **Estephani Cerros** effectively portraying Karina, a Spanish teacher with American-Cuban heritage who tries her best to teach sensitively but sometimes makes excuses for her colleague's racist behavior. Cerros adds depth and insight into the dynamics of the teaching profession.

Cory Clarke's portrayal of Garrett is nuanced, effectively portraying a worn-out teacher who tries hard and does not see themselves as the problem. This is not an easy part to play, but Clarke does it justice, showcasing the character's struggle between personal ambition and ethical responsibility.

Wendy Joseph as Corinne is a powerful representation of youthful determination, artistic integrity, and fiery ambition—all wrapped up into the perfect package. I loved everything about Joseph's portrayal of Corinne and how she perfectly portrayed child-like innocence, combined with a maturity that only Black children in 21st-century America would understand. Even after Garrett explodes on Corinne, she chooses to harness that energy into her art and presentation; Joseph's Corinne exudes light in dark circumstances.

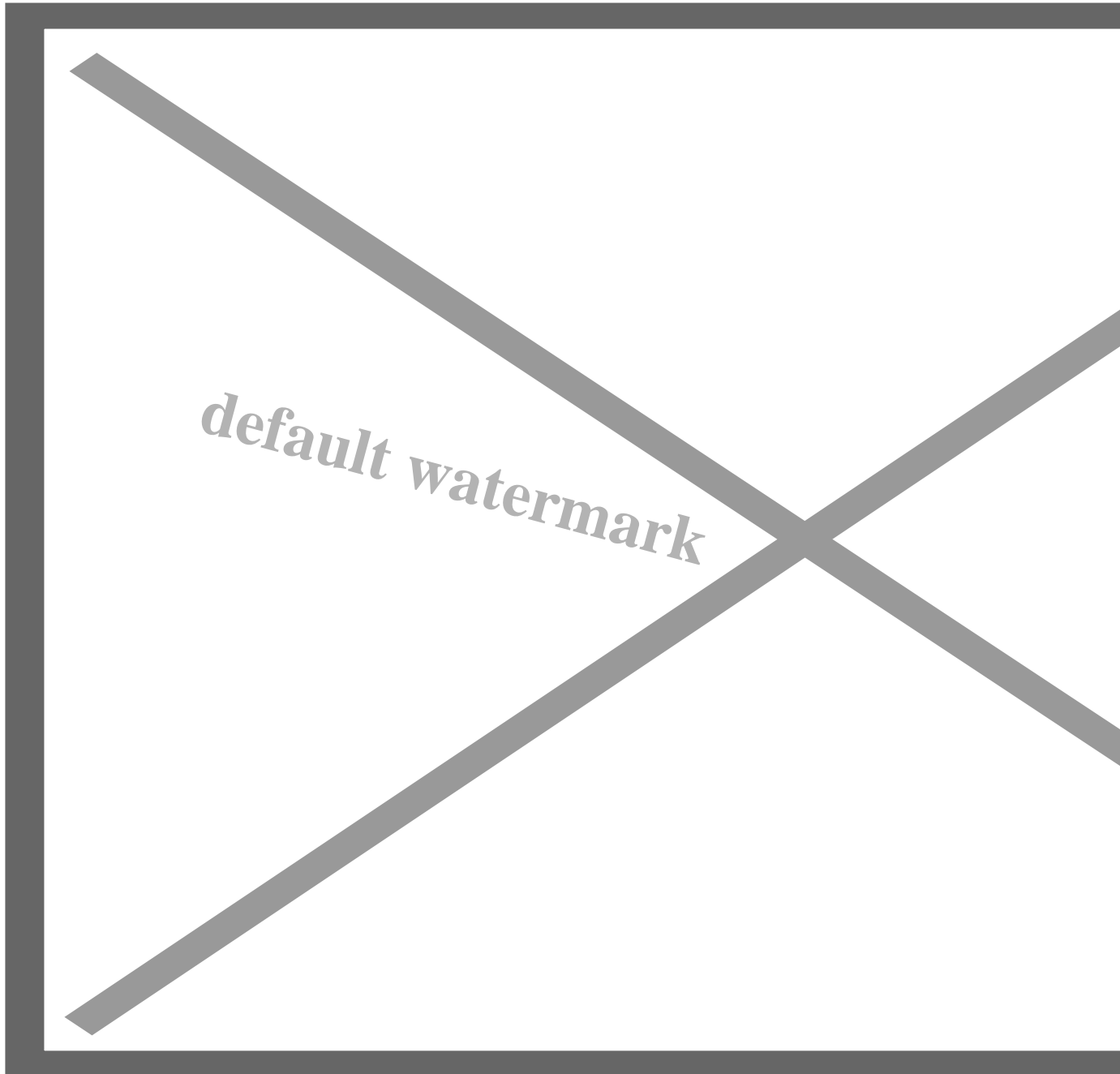
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The production benefits from the meticulous work of its creative team. **Gabe White**'s lighting design enhances the play's emotional landscape, while **Allie Andersen**'s scenic design creates a vivid and immersive high school art classroom. **Citlali Urquiza**'s costumes and makeup contribute to the authenticity of the setting, and **Alicia Washington**'s dual role as properties and sound designer adds a cohesive touch to the overall presentation. **Camille Washington**'s contributions as co-director and painter further enrich the visual elements of the play.

Running for 80 minutes without intermission, the play maintains a brisk and engaging pace, capturing the audience's attention from start to finish. The prohibition on recording ensures that the live experience remains exclusive, preserving the play's intended impact. *God Kinda Looks Like Tupac* offers a thought-provoking look at the pressures educators and students face, making it a must-see for

those interested in the complexities of education, creativity, and ambition. Good Company Theatre's production is a testament to the power of theatre to spark meaningful conversations and reflections.



[Good Company Theatre](#) is owned and operated by Alicia and Camille Washington and is the *only* live theater in Utah owned by Black women. They want it to be a safe place for audiences and artists to hone their craft and to take risks that maybe they have been disempowered to take other places (quoted in [Becky Jacobs's Salt Lake Tribune article](#)). They have come a long way since their first theater, which was in a 1,200-square-foot space on 25th Street above an adult novelty shop. Camille said it had a "crumbling infrastructure" and their "swamp cooler leaked" on the audience. Seeing these sisters succeed in their beautiful space is empowering, especially post-COVID, which has not been kind to the arts.



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Good Company Theatre Presents *God Kinda Looks Like Tupac* by [Emilio Rodriguez](#)

Dates: Sept 12-29, Saturday Matinees at 8 pm and 4 pm, and Sundays at 4 pm

Tickets: \$25-30, with student tickets available for \$15 with student ID. <https://goodcotheatre.com/>

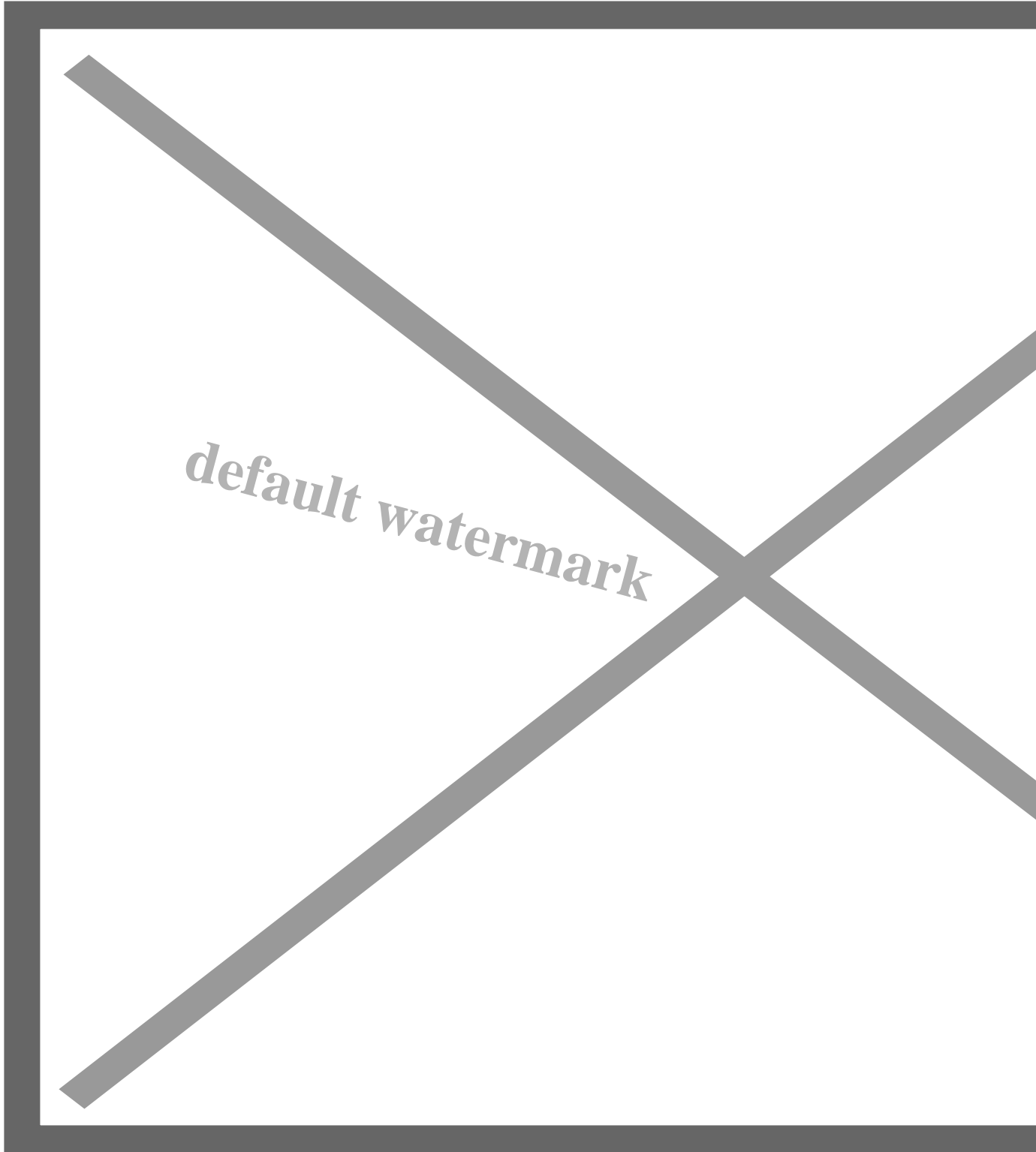
Contact: info@goodcotheatre.com, 801-917-4969

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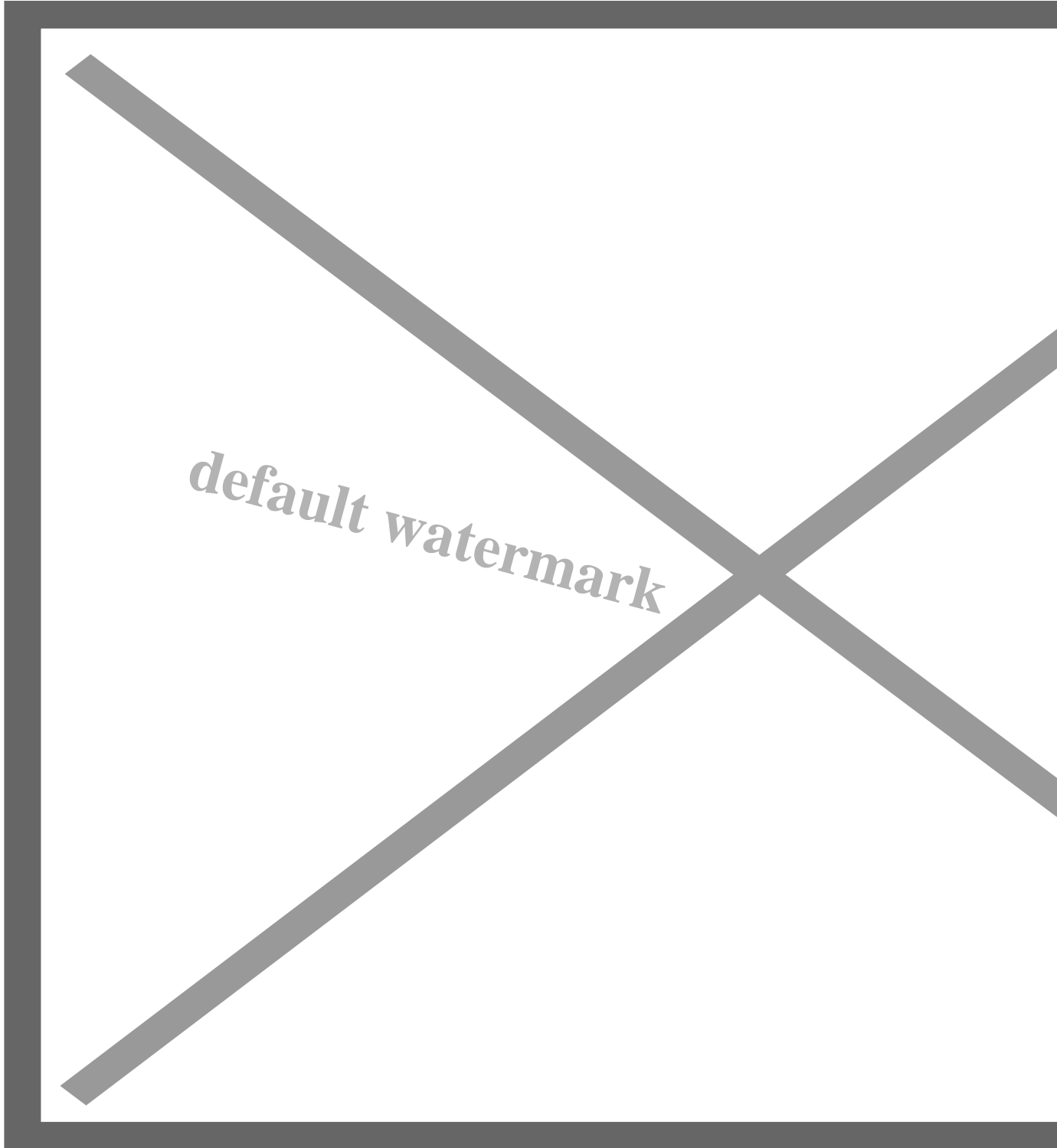


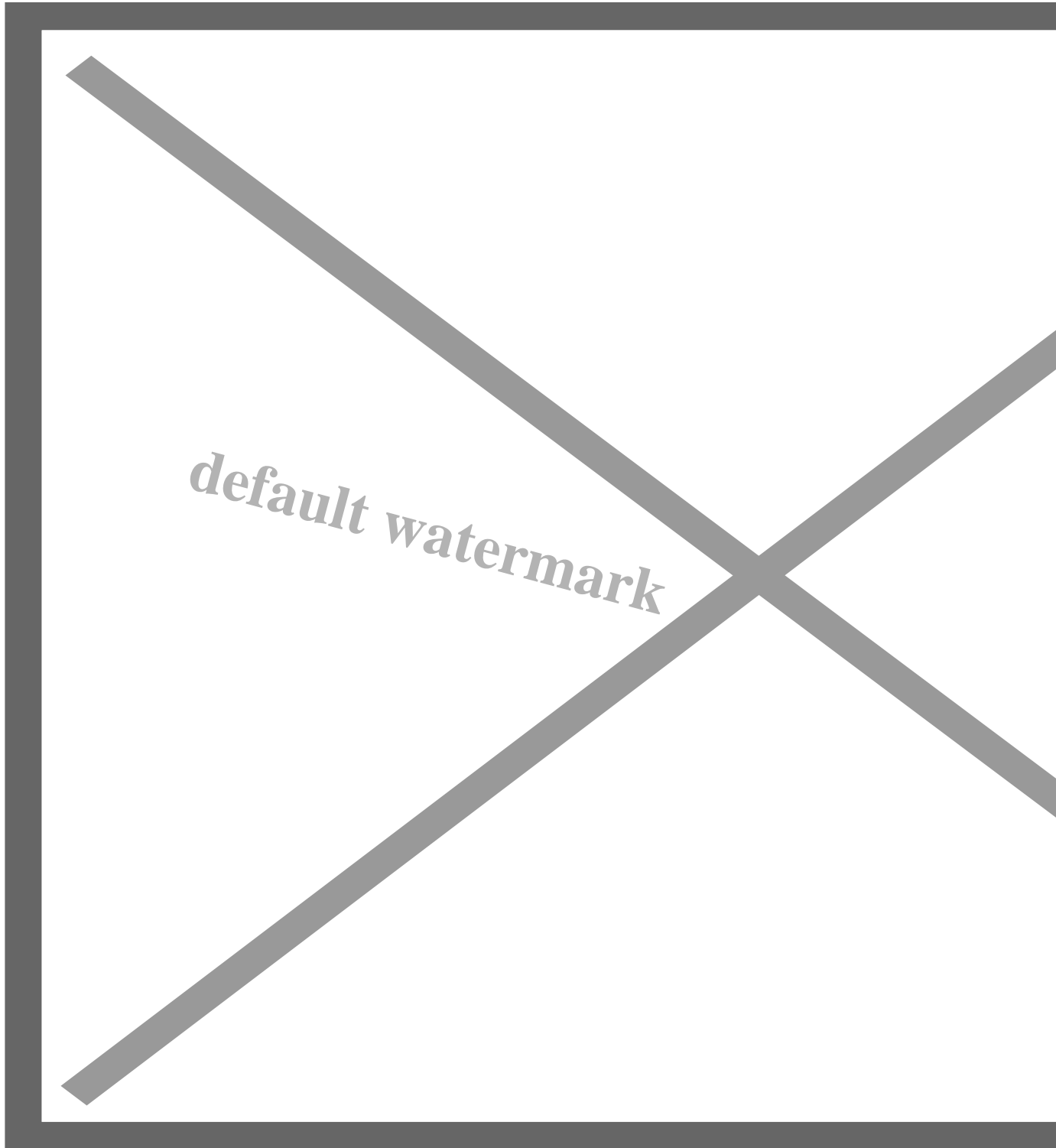
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