

## PICKS OF THE WEEK

# German photographer looks beyond the obvious

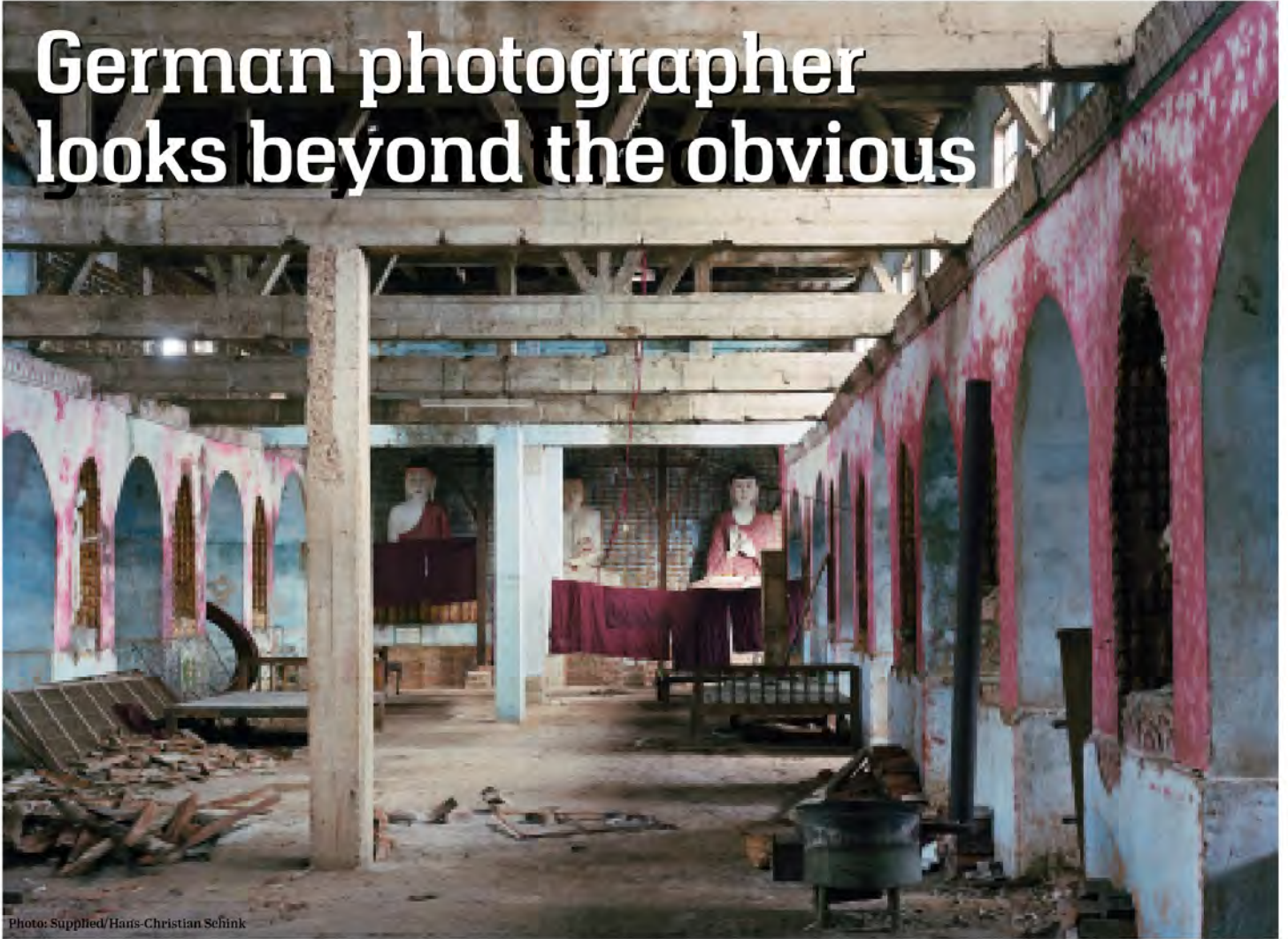


Photo: Supplied/Hans-Christian Schink

BY DOUGLAS LONG

**C**AMERA-TOTING visitors to Myanmar typically focus on the most overtly picturesque subjects, such as golden pagodas, Buddha statues and ethnic minorities posing in traditional dress.

German photographer Hans-Christian Schink has a different approach: to scratch below the surface and capture images that show places "where everyday life happens".

"There are so many clichés, especially in the Western world,

how people look at Myanmar in a way that doesn't have much to do with reality," he told *The Myanmar Times*.

"Western people very often see Myanmar as a place of traditional quiet living and people peacefully following their religion. But I think it's not really true. But I also didn't want to 'prove' the opposite. I'm not a journalist or a war photographer. I'm more interested in things that are in a way obvious but also have an underlying meaning."

During four trips to Myanmar from 2013 to 2015, Schink travelled around the country photographing subjects that caught his attention.

About 20 of these images will be on display at the Goethe Villa in Yangon from June 4 to 20.

One topic of interest for Schink was town scenes free from the burden of famous landmarks – for example, empty streets winding between unremarkable houses that could be located just about anywhere in Myanmar.

"I'm working with a large-format camera so these are very carefully chosen locations. They are not done in the moment," he said.

"I usually don't have a fixed concept in mind so I don't look for specific places. I do a bit of research on the internet to get an idea of

which places might be of interest to me. But then I have to do the reality check – just walking or driving around – and then suddenly finding something which fits with my inner image."

Other photos in the series are meant to show how religious building and symbols are present within the rural landscape and the important role these places play in the social structure. A few images do include recognisable religious landmarks in places like Bagan or Bago, but even these differ from the usual tourist-promotion fare.

"I tried to show the Buddha images in a little different way,"

Schink said. "I usually wait for an overcast sky and undramatic light, which is no shadows, no blue skies, no sun – so, very neutral light. I tried to capture images that are a little different from what you can find in the coffee-table books."

Hans-Christian Schink's photographs can be seen from June 4 to 20 at the Goethe Villa (8 Ko Min Ko Chin Road, Bahan township), which is open daily from 11am to 7pm.

The opening ceremony for the exhibition is on June 4 at 6:30pm. Schink will also present an overview of his body of work at Goethe Villa on June 14 at 7pm. [W](#)